THE WORKS OF GEORGE MEREDITH

MEMORIAL EDITION

VOLUME

XXIV

The Old Chartist.

GEORGE MEREDITH

POEMS

VOL. I

Memorial
Edition

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LTD
1910

12159

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v.24

Edinburgh : T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty

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POEMS

CHILLIANWALLAH [1]

CHILLIANWALLAH, Chillianwallah !
Where our brothers fought and bled,
O thy name is natural music
And a dirge above the dead !
Though we have not been defeated,
Though we can't be overcome,
Still, whene'er thou art repeated,
I would fain that grief were dumb.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah !
'Tis a name so sad and strange,
Like a breeze through midnight harpstrings
Ringing many a mournful change ;
But the wildness and the sorrow
Have a meaning of their own—
Oh, whereof no glad to-morrow
Can relieve the dismal tone !

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah !
'Tis a village dark and low,
By the bloody Jhelum river
Bridged by the foreboding foe ;

[1] First contributed to a MS. magazine, 'The Monthly Observer,' in the year 1849; first printed in *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, July 7, 1849.

And across the wintry water
He is ready to retreat,
When the carnage and the slaughter
Shall have paid for his defeat.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah !
'Tis a wild and dreary plain,
Strewn with plots of thickest jungle,
Matted with the gory stain.
There the murder-mouthed artillery,
In the deadly ambuscade,
Wrought the thunder of its treachery
On the skeleton brigade.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah !
When the night set in with rain,
Came the savage plundering devils
To their work among the slain ;
And the wounded and the dying
In cold blood did share the doom
Of their comrades round them lying,
Stiff in the dead skyless gloom.

Chillianwallah, Chillianwallah !
Thou wilt be a doleful chord,
And a mystic note of mourning
That will need no chiming word ;
And that heart will leap with anguish
Who may understand thee best ;
But the hopes of all will languish
Till thy memory is at rest.

THE DOE: A FRAGMENT

(FROM 'WANDERING WILLIE')

And—'Yonder look! yoho! yoho!
Nancy is off!' the farmer cried,
Advancing by the river side,
Red-kerchieft and brown-coated;—'So,
My girl, who else could leap like that?
So neatly! like a lady! 'Zounds!
Look at her how she leads the hounds!'
And waving his dusty beaver hat,
He cheered across the chase-filled water,
And clapt his arm about his daughter,
And gave to Joan a courteous hug,
And kiss that, like a stubborn plug
From generous vats in vastness rounded,
The inner wealth and spirit sounded:
Eagerly pointing South, where, lo,
The daintiest, fleetest-footed doe
Led o'er the fields and thro' the furze
Beyond: her lively delicate ears
Prickt up erect, and in her track
A dappled lengthy-striding pack.

Scarce had they cast eyes upon her,
When every heart was wagered on her,
And half in dread, and half delight,
They watched her lovely bounding flight;
As now across the flashing green,

And now beneath the stately trees,
And now far distant in the dene,
She headed on with graceful ease :
Hanging aloft with doubled knees,
At times athwart some hedge or gate ;
And slackening pace by slow degrees,
As for the foremost foe to wait.
Renewing her outstripping rate
Whene'er the hot pursuers neared,
By garden wall and paled estate,
Where clambering gazers whooped and cheered.
Here winding under elm and oak,
And slanting up the sunny hill :
Splashing the water here like smoke
Among the mill-holms round the mill.

And—' Let her go ; she shows her game,
My Nancy girl, my pet and treasure ! '
The farmer sighed : his eyes with pleasure
Brimming : ' 'Tis my daughter's name,
My second daughter lying yonder.'
And Willie's eye in search did wander,
And caught at once, with moist regard,
The white gleams of a grey churchyard.
' Three weeks before my girl had gone,
And while upon her pillows propped,
She lay at eve ; the weakling fawn—
For still it seems a fawn just dropt
A se'nnight—to my Nancy's bed
I brought to make my girl a gift :
The mothers of them both were dead :
And both to bless it was my drift,
By giving each a friend ; not thinking
How rapidly my girl was sinking.
And I remember how, to pat

Its neck, she stretched her hand so weak,
And its cold nose against her cheek
Pressed fondly : and I fetched the mat
To make it up a couch just by her,
Where in the lone dark hours to lie :
For neither dear old nurse nor I
Would any single wish deny her.
And there unto the last it lay ;
And in the pastures cared to play
Little or nothing : there its meals
And milk I brought : and even now
The creature such affection feels
For that old room that, when and how,
'Tis strange to mark, it slinks and steals
To get there, and all day conceals.
And once when nurse who, since that time,
Keeps house for me, was very sick,
Waking upon the midnight chime,
And listening to the stair-clock's click,
I heard a rustling, half uncertain,
Close against the dark bed-curtain :
And while I thrust my leg to kick,
And feel the phantom with my feet,
A loving tongue began to lick
My left hand lying on the sheet ;
And warm sweet breath upon me blew,
And that 'twas Nancy then I knew.
So, for her love, I had good cause
To have the creature " Nancy " christened.'

He paused, and in the moment's pause,
His eyes and Willie's strangely glistened.
Nearer came Joan, and Bessy hung
With face averted, near enough
To hear, and sob unheard ; the young

And careless ones had scampered off
Meantime, and sought the loftiest place
To beacon the approaching chase.

'Daily upon the meads to browse,
Goes Nancy with those dairy cows
You see behind the clematis :
And such a favourite she is,
That when fatigued, and helter skelter,
Among them from her foes to shelter,
She dashes when the chase is over,
They 'll close her in and give her cover,
And bend their horns against the hounds,
And low, and keep them out of bounds !
From the house dogs she dreads no harm,
And is good friends with all the farm,
Man, and bird, and beast, howbeit
Their natures seem so opposite.
And she is known for many a mile,
And noted for her splendid style,
For her clear leap and quick slight hoof ;
Welcome she is in many a roof.
And if I say, I love her, man !
I say but little : her fine eyes full
Of memories of my girl, at Yule
And May-time, make her dearer than
Dumb brute to men has been, I think.
So dear I do not find her dumb.
I know her ways, her slightest wink,
So well ; and to my hand she 'll come,
Sidelong, for food or a caress,
Just like a loving human thing.
Nor can I help, I do confess,
Some touch of human sorrowing
To think there may be such a doubt

That from the next world she 'll be shut out,
And parted from me ! And well I mind
How, when my girl's last moments came,
Her soft eyes very soft and kind,
She joined her hands and prayed the same,
That she " might meet her father, mother,
Sister Bess, and each dear brother,
And with them, if it might be, one
Who was her last companion."
Meaning the fawn—the doe you mark—
For my bay mare was then a foal,
And time has passed since then :—but hark ! '

For like the shrieking of a soul
Shut in a tomb, a darkened cry
Of inward-wailing agony
Surprised them, and all eyes on each
Fixed in the mute-appealing speech
Of self-reproachful apprehension :
Knowing not what to think or do :
But Joan, recovering first, broke through
The instantaneous suspension,
And knelt upon the ground, and guessed
The bitterness at a glance, and pressed
Into the comfort of her breast
The deep-throed quaking shape that drooped
In misery's wilful aggravation,
Before the farmer as he stooped,
Touched with accusing consternation :
Soothing her as she sobbed aloud :—
' Not me ! not me ! Oh, no, no, no !
Not me ! God will not take me in !
Nothing can wipe away my sin !
I shall not see her : you will go ;
You and all that she loves so :

Not me ! not me ! Oh, no, no, no ! '
Colourless, her long black hair,
Like seaweed in a tempest tossed
Tangling astray, to Joan's care
She yielded like a creature lost :
Yielded, drooping toward the ground,
As doth a shape one half-hour drowned,
And heaved from sea with mast and spar,
All dark of its immortal star.
And on that tender heart, inured
To flatter basest grief, and fight
Despair upon the brink of night,
She suffered herself to sink, assured
Of refuge ; and her ear inclined
To comfort ; and her thoughts resigned
To counsel ; her wild hair let brush
From off her weeping brows ; and shook
With many little sobs that took
Deeper-drawn breaths, till into sighs,
Long sighs, they sank ; and to the ' hush ! '
Of Joan's gentle chide, she sought
Childlike to check them as she ought,
Looking up at her infantwise.
And Willie, gazing on them both,
Shivered with bliss through blood and brain,
To see the darling of his troth
Like a maternal angel strain
The sinful and the sinless child
At once on either breast, and there
In peace and promise reconciled
Unite them : nor could Nature's care
With subtler sweet beneficence
Have fed the springs of penitence,
Still keeping true, though harshly tried,
The vital prop of human pride.

BEAUTY ROHTRAUT

(FROM MÖRICKE)

WHAT is the name of King Ringang's daughter ?
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut !
And what does she do the livelong day,
Since she dare not knit and spin alway ?
O hunting and fishing is ever her play !
And, heigh ! that her huntsman I might be !
I 'd hunt and fish right merrily !
Be silent, heart !

And it chanced that, after this some time,—
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut,—
The boy in the Castle has gained access,
And a horse he has got and a huntsman's dress,
To hunt and to fish with the merry Princess ;
And, O ! that a king's son I might be !
Beauty Rohtraut I love so tenderly.
Hush ! hush ! my heart.

Under a grey old oak they sat,
Beauty, Beauty Rohtraut !
She laughs : ' Why look you so slyly at me ?
If you have heart enough, come, kiss me.'
Cried the breathless boy, ' kiss thee ? '
But he thinks, kind fortune has favoured my youth ;
And thrice he has kissed Beauty Rohtraut's mouth.
Down ! down ! mad heart.

Then slowly and silently they rode home,—
Rohtraut, Beauty Rohtraut!
The boy was lost in his delight:
'And, wert thou Empress this very night,
I would not heed or feel the blight;
Ye thousand leaves of the wild wood wist
How Beauty Rohtraut's mouth I kiss'd.
Hush! hush! wild heart.'

THE OLIVE BRANCH

A DOVE flew with an Olive Branch ;
It crossed the sea and reached the shore,
And on a ship about to launch
Dropped down the happy sign it bore.

' An omen ' rang the glad acclaim !
The Captain stooped and picked it up,
' Be then the Olive Branch her name,'
Cried she who flung the christening cup.

The vessel took the laughing tides ;
It was a joyous revelry
To see her dashing from her sides
The rough, salt kisses of the sea.

And forth into the bursting foam
She spread her sail and sped away,
The rolling surge her restless home,
Her incense wreaths the showering spray.

Far out, and where the riot waves
Run mingling in tumultuous throngs,
She danced above a thousand graves,
And heard a thousand briny songs.

Her mission with her manly crew,
Her flag unfurl'd, her title told,
She took the Old World to the New,
And brought the New World to the Old.

Secure of friendliest welcomings,
She swam the havens sheening fair ;
Secure upon her glad white wings,
She fluttered on the ocean air.

To her no more the bastioned fort
Shot out its swarthy tongue of fire ;
From bay to bay, from port to port,
Her coming was the world's desire.

And tho' the tempest lashed her oft,
And tho' the rocks had hungry teeth,
And lightnings split the masts aloft,
And thunders shook the planks beneath,

And tho' the storm, self-willed and blind,
Made tatters of her dauntless sail,
And all the wildness of the wind
Was loosed on her, she did not fail ;

But gallantly she ploughed the main,
And gloriously her welcome pealed,
And grandly shone to sky and plain
The goodly bales her decks revealed ;

Brought from the fruitful eastern glebes
Where blow the gusts of balm and spice,
Or where the black blockaded ribs
Are jammed 'mongst ghostly fleets of ice,

Or where upon the curling hills
Glow clusters of the bright-eyed grape,
Or where the hand of labour drills
The stubbornness of earth to shape ;

Rich harvestings and wealthy germs,
And handicrafts and shapely wares,
And spinnings of the hermit worms,
And fruits that bloom by lions' lairs.

Come, read the meaning of the deep !
The use of winds and waters learn !
'Tis not to make the mother weep
For sons that never will return ;

'Tis not to make the nations show
Contempt for all whom seas divide ;
'Tis not to pamper war and woe,
Nor feed traditionary pride ;

'Tis not to make the floating bulk
Mask death upon its slippery deck,
Itself in turn a shattered hulk,
A ghastly raft, a bleeding wreck.

It is to knit with loving lip
The interests of land to land ;
To join in far-seen fellowship
The tropic and the polar strand.

It is to make that foaming Strength
Whose rebel forces wrestle still
Thro' all his boundaried breadth and length
Become a vassal to our will.

It is to make the various skies,
And all the various fruits they vaunt,
And all the dowers of earth we prize,
Subservient to our household want.

And more, for knowledge crowns the gain
Of intercourse with other souls,
And Wisdom travels not in vain
The plunging spaces of the poles.

The wild Atlantic's weltering gloom,
Earth-clasping seas of North and South,
The Baltic with its amber spume,
The Caspian with its frozen mouth ;

The broad Pacific, basking bright,
And girdling lands of lustrous growth,
Vast continents and isles of light,
Dumb tracts of undiscovered sloth ;

She visits these, traversing each ;
They ripen to the common sun ;
Thro' diverse forms and different speech,
The world's humanity is one.

O may her voice have power to say
How soon the wrecking discords cease,
When every wandering wave is gay
With golden argosies of peace !

Now when the ark of human fate,
Long baffled by the wayward wind,
Is drifting with its peopled freight,
Safe haven on the heights to find ;

Safe haven from the drowning slime
Of evil deeds and Deluge wrath ;—
To plant again the foot of Time
Upon a purer, firmer path ;

'Tis now the hour to probe the ground,
To watch the Heavens, to speak the word,
The fathoms of the deep to sound,
And send abroad the missioned bird.

On strengthened wing for evermore,
Let Science, swiftly as she can,
Fly seaward on from shore to shore,
And bind the links of man to man ;

And like that fair propitious Dove
Bless future fleets about to launch ;
Make every freight a freight of love,
And every ship an Olive Branch.

SONG

Love within the lover's breast
Burns like Hesper in the west,
O'er the ashes of the sun,
Till the day and night are done ;
Then when dawn drives up her car—
Lo ! it is the morning star.

Love ! thy love pours down on mine
As the sunlight on the vine,
As the snow-rill on the vale,
As the salt breeze in the sail ;
As the song unto the bird,
On my lips thy name is heard.

As a dewdrop on the rose
In thy heart my passion glows,
As a skylark to the sky
Up into thy breast I fly ;
As a sea-shell of the sea
Ever shall I sing of thee.

THE WILD ROSE AND THE SNOWDROP

The Snowdrop is the prophet of the flowers ;
It lives and dies upon its bed of snows ;
And like a thought of spring it comes and goes,
Hanging its head beside our leafless bowers.
The sun's betrothing kiss it never knows,
Nor all the glowing joy of golden showers ;
But ever in a placid, pure repose,
More like a spirit with its look serene,
Droops its pale cheek veined thro' with infant green.

Queen of her sisters is the sweet Wild Rose,
Sprung from the earnest sun and ripe young June ;
The year's own darling and the Summer's Queen !
Lustrous as the new-throned crescent moon.
Much of that early prophet look she shows,
Mixed with her fair espoused blush which glows,
As if the ethereal fairy blood were seen ;
Like a soft evening over sunset snows,
Half twilight violet shade, half crimson sheen.

Twin-born are both in beauteousness, most fair
In all that glads the eye and charms the air ;
In all that wakes emotions in the mind
And sows sweet sympathies for human kind.
Twin-born, albeit their seasons are apart,
They bloom together in the thoughtful heart ;
Fair symbols of the marvels of our state,
Mute speakers of the oracles of fate !

For each, fulfilling nature's law, fulfils
Itself and its own aspirations pure ;
Living and dying ; letting faith ensure
New life when deathless Spring shall touch the hills.
Each perfect in its place ; and each content
With that perfection which its being meant :
Divided not by months that intervene,
But linked by all the flowers that bud between.
Forever smiling thro' its season brief,
The one in glory and the one in grief :
Forever painting to our museful sight,
How lowlihead and loveliness unite.

Born from the first blind yearning of the earth
To be a mother and give happy birth,
Ere yet the northern sun such rapture brings,
Lo, from her virgin breast the Snowdrop springs ;
And ere the snows have melted from the grass,
And not a strip of greensward doth appear,
Save the faint prophecy its cheeks declare,
Alone, unkissed, unloved, behold it pass !
While in the ripe enthronement of the year,
Whispering the breeze, and wedding the rich air
With her so sweet, delicious bridal breath,—
Odorous and exquisite beyond compare,
And starr'd with dews upon her forehead clear,
Fresh-hearted as a Maiden Queen should be
Who takes the land's devotion as her fee,—
The Wild Rose blooms, all summer for her dower,
Nature's most beautiful and perfect flower.

THE DEATH OF WINTER

When April with her wild blue eye
Comes dancing over the grass,
And all the crimson buds so shy
Peep out to see her pass ;
As lightly she loosens her showery locks
And flutters her rainy wings ;
Laughingly stoops
To the glass of the stream,
And loosens and loops
Her hair by the gleam,
While all the young villagers blithe as the flocks
Go frolicking round in rings ;—
Then Winter, he who tamed the fly,
Turns on his back and prepares to die,
For he cannot live longer under the sky.

Down the valleys glittering green,
Down from the hills in snowy rills,
He melts between the border sheen
And leaps the flowery verges !
He cannot choose but brighten their hues,
And tho' he would creep, he fain must leap,
For the quick Spring spirit urges.
Down the vale and down the dale
He leaps and lights, till his moments fail,
Buried in blossoms red and pale,
While the sweet birds sing his dirges !

O Winter! I 'd live that life of thine,
With a frosty brow and an icicle tongue,
And never a song my whole life long,—
Were such delicious burial mine!
To die and be buried, and so remain
A wandering brook in April's train,
Fixing my dying eyes for aye
On the dawning brows of maiden May.

SONG

The moon is alone in the sky
As thou in my soul ;
The sea takes her image to lie
Where the white ripples roll
All night in a dream,
With the light of her beam,
Hushedly, mournfully, mistily up to the shore.
The pebbles speak low
In the ebb and the flow,
As I when thy voice came at intervals, tuned to adore :
Nought other stirred
Save my heart all unheard
Beating to bliss that is past evermore.

JOHN LACKLAND

A wicked man is bad enough on earth ;
But O the baleful lustre of a chief
Once pledged in tyranny ! O star of dearth
Darkly illumining a nation's grief !
How many men have worn thee on their brows !
Alas for them and us ! God's precious gift
Of gracious dispensation got by theft—
The damning form of false unholy vows !
The thief of God and man must have his fee :
And thou, John Lackland, despicable prince—
Basest of England's banes before or since !
Thrice traitor, coward, thief ! O thou shalt be
The historic warning, trampled and abhorr'd
Who dared to steal and stain the symbols of the Lord!

THE SLEEPING CITY

A PRINCESS in the eastern tale
Paced thro' a marble city pale,
And saw in ghastly shapes of stone
The sculptured life she breathed alone ;

Saw, where'er her eye might range,
Herself the only child of change ;
And heard her echoed footfall chime
Between Oblivion and Time ;

And in the squares where fountains played,
And up the spiral balustrade,
Along the drowsy corridors,
Even to the inmost sleeping floors,

Surveyed in wonder chilled with dread
The seemingness of Death, not dead ;
Life's semblance but without its storm,
And silence frosting every form ;

Crowned figures, cold and grouping slaves,
Like suddenly arrested waves
About to sink, about to rise,—
Strange meaning in their stricken eyes ;

And cloths and couches live with flame
Of leopards fierce and lions tame,
And hunters in the jungle reed,
Thrown out by sombre glowing brede ;

Dumb chambers hushed with fold on fold,
And cumbrous gorgeousness of gold ;
White casements o'er embroidered seats,
Looking on solitudes of streets,—

On palaces and column'd towers,
Unconscious of the stony hours ;
Harsh gateways startled at a sound,
With burning lamps all burnish'd round ;—

Surveyed in awe this wealth and state,
Touched by the finger of a Fate,
And drew with slow-awakening fear
The sternness of the atmosphere ;—

And gradually, with stealthier foot,
Became herself a thing as mute,
And listened,—while with swift alarm
Her alien heart shrank from the charm ;

Yet as her thoughts dilating rose,
Took glory in the great repose,
And over every postured form
Spread lava-like and brooded warm,—

And fixed on every frozen face
Beheld the record of its race,
And in each chiselled feature knew
The stormy life that once blushed thro' ;—

The ever-present of the past
There written ; all that lightened last,
Love, anguish, hope, disease, despair,
Beauty and rage, all written there ;—

Enchanted Passions ! whose pale doom
Is never flushed by blight or bloom,
But sentinelled by silent orbs,
Whose light the pallid scene absorbs.—

Like such a one I pace along
This City with its sleeping throng ;
Like her with dread and awe, that turns
To rapture, and sublimely yearns ;—

For now the quiet stars look down
On lights as quiet as their own ;
The streets that groaned with traffic show
As if with silence paved below ;

The latest revellers are at peace,
The signs of in-door tumult cease,
From gay saloon and low resort,
Comes not one murmur or report :

The clattering chariot rolls not by,
The windows show no waking eye,
The houses smoke not, and the air
Is clear, and all the midnight fair.

The centre of the striving world,
Round which the human fate is curled,
To which the future crieth wild,—
Is pillowed like a cradled child.

The palace roof that guards a crown,
The mansion swathed in dreamy down,
Hovel, court, and alley-shed,
Sleep in the calmness of the dead.

Now while the many-motived heart
Lies hushed—fireside and busy mart,
And mortal pulses beat the tune
That charms the calm cold ear o' the moon

Whose yellowing crescent down the West
Leans listening, now when every breast
Its basest or its purest heaves,
The soul that joys, the soul that grieves ;—

While Fame is crowning happy brows
That day will blindly scorn, while vows
Of anguished love, long hidden, speak
From faltering tongue and flushing cheek

The language only known to dreams,
Rich eloquence of rosy themes !
While on the Beauty's folded mouth
Disdain just wrinkles baby youth ;

While Poverty dispenses alms
To outcasts, bread, and healing balms ;
While old Mammon knows himself
The greatest beggar for his pelf ;

While noble things in darkness grope,
The Statesman's aim, the Poet's hope ;
The Patriot's impulse gathers fire,
And germs of future fruits aspire ;—

Now while dumb nature owns its links,
And from one common fountain drinks,
Methinks in all around I see
This Picture in Eternity ;—

A marbled City planted there
With all its pageants and despair ;
A peopled hush, a Death not dead,
But stricken with Medusa's head ;—

And in the Gorgon's glance for aye
The lifeless immortality
Reveals in sculptured calmness all
Its latest life beyond recall.

THE POETRY OF CHAUCER

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard Chaunticlere.
Tender to tearfulness—childlike, and manly, and motherly;
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet English ground.

THE POETRY OF SPENSER

Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance;
Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and knights.

THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE

PICTURE some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming ocean ;—
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays ;
Passions and pageants ; sweet love singing bird-like above it ;
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by one great human heart.

THE POETRY OF MILTON

LIKE to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout the bright spheres.

THE POETRY OF SOUTHEY

KEEN as an eagle whose flight towards the dim empyréan
Fearless of toil or fatigue ever royally wends !
Vast in the cloud-coloured robes of the balm-breathing Orient
Lo ! the grand Epic advances, unfolding the humanest truth.

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

A BROOK glancing under green leaves, self-delighting, exulting,
And full of a gurgling melody ever renewed—
Renewed thro' all changes of Heaven, unceasing in sunlight,
Unceasing in moonlight, but hushed in the beams of the holier orb.

THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

SEE'ST thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets ascending
Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn ?
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it flutters—
Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings down at eve.

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

A BREATH of the mountains, fresh born in the regions majestic,
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the sky.
The voice of great Nature ; sublime with her lofty conceptions,
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green lowly vale.

THE POETRY OF KEATS

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the dolorous sound,
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearning of passion
That wins immortality even while panting delirious with death.

VIOLETS

Violets, shy violets!
How many hearts with you compare!
Who hide themselves in thickest green,
And thence, unseen,
Ravish the enraptured air
With sweetness, dewy fresh and rare!

Violets, shy violets!
Human hearts to me shall be
Viewless violets in the grass,
And as I pass,
Odours and sweet imagery
Will wait on mine and gladden me!

ANGELIC LOVE

Angelic love that stoops with heavenly lips
To meet its earthly mate ;
Heroic love that to its sphere's eclipse
Can dare to join its fate
With one beloved devoted human heart,
And share with it the passion and the smart,
The undying bliss
Of its most fleeting kiss ;
The fading grace
Of its most sweet embrace :—
Angelic love, heroic love !
Whose birth can only be above,
Whose wandering must be on earth,
Whose haven where it first had birth !
Love that can part with all but its own worth,
And joy in every sacrifice
That beautifies its Paradise !
And gently, like a golden-fruited vine,
With earnest tenderness itself consign,
And creeping up deliriously entwine
Its dear delicious arms
Round the beloved being !
With fair unfolded charms,
All-trusting, and all-seeing,—
Grape-laden with full bunches of young wine !
While to the panting heart's dry yearning drouth
Buds the rich dewy mouth—

Tenderly uplifted,
Like two rose-leaves drifted
Down in a long warm sigh of the sweet South !
Such love, such love is thine,
Such heart is mine,
O thou of mortal visions most divine !

TWILIGHT MUSIC

Know you the low pervading breeze
That softly sings
In the trembling leaves of twilight trees,
As if the wind were dreaming on its wings ?
And have you marked their still degrees
Of ebbing melody, like the strings
Of a silver harp swept by a spirit's hand
In some strange glimmering land,
'Mid gushing springs,
And glistenings
Of waters and of planets, wild and grand !
And have you marked in that still time
The chariots of those shining cars
Brighten upon the hushing dark,
And bent to hark
That Voice, amid the poplar and the lime,
Pause in the dilating lustre
Of the spheral cluster ;
Pause but to renew its sweetness, deep
As dreams of heaven to souls that sleep !
And felt, despite earth's jarring wars,
When day is done
And dead the sun,
Still a voice divine can sing,
Still is there sympathy can bring
A whisper from the stars !
Ah, with this sentience quickly will you know

How like a tree I tremble to the tones
Of your sweet voice!
How keenly I rejoice
When in me with sweet motions slow
The spiritual music ebbs and moans—
Lives in the lustre of those heavenly eyes,
Dies in the light of its own paradise,—
Dies, and relives eternal from its death,
Immortal melodies in each deep breath;
Sweeps thro' my being, bearing up to thee
Myself, the weight of its eternity;
Till, nerved to life from its ordeal fire,
It marries music with the human lyre,
Blending divine delight with loveliest desire.

REQUIEM

WHERE faces are hueless, where eyelids are dewless,
Where passion is silent and hearts never crave ;
Where thought hath no theme, and where sleep hath no dream,
In patience and peace thou art gone—to thy grave !
Gone where no warning can wake thee to morning,
Dead tho' a thousand hands stretch'd out to save.

Thou cam'st to us sighing, and singing and dying,
How could it be otherwise, fair as thou wert ?
Placidly fading, and sinking and shading
At last to that shadow, the latest desert ;
Wasting and waning, but still, still remaining.
Alas for the hand that could deal the death-hurt !

The Summer that brightens, the Winter that whitens,
The world and its voices, the sea and the sky,
The bloom of creation, the tie of relation,
All—all is a blank to thine ear and thine eye ;
The ear may not listen, the eye may not glisten,
Nevermore waked by a smile or a sigh.

The tree that is rootless must ever be fruitless ;
And thou art alone in thy death and thy birth ;
No last loving token of wedded love broken,
No sign of thy singleness, sweetness and worth ;
Lost as the flower that is drowned in the shower,
Fall'n like a snowflake to melt in the earth.

THE FLOWER OF THE RUINS

Take thy lute and sing
By the ruined castle walls,
Where the torrent-foam falls,
And long weeds wave :
Take thy lute and sing,
O'er the grey ancestral grave !
Daughter of a King,
Tune thy string.

Sing of happy hours,
In the roar of rushing time ;
Till all the echoes chime
To the days gone by ;
Sing of passing hours
To the ever-present sky ;—
Weep—and let the showers
Wake thy flowers.

Sing of glories gone :—
No more the blazoned fold
From the banner is unrolled ;
The gold sun is set.
Sing his glory gone,
For thy voice may charm him yet ;
Daughter of the dawn,
He is gone !

Pour forth all thy grief !
Passionately sweep the chords,
Wed them quivering to thy words ;
Wild words of wail !
Shed thy withered grief—
But hold not Autumn to thy bale ;
The eddy of the leaf
Must be brief !

Sing up to the night :
Hard it is for streaming tears
To read the calmness of the spheres ;
Coldly they shine ;
Sing up to their light ;
They have views thou may'st divine—
Gain prophetic sight
From their light !

On the windy hills
Lo, the little harebell leans
On the spire-grass that it queens,
With bonnet blue ;
Trusting love instils
Love and subject reverence true ;
Learn what love instils
On the hills !

By the bare wayside
Placid snowdrops hang their cheeks,
Softly touch'd with pale green streaks,
Soon, soon, to die ;
On the clothed hedgeside
Bands of rosy beauties vie,
In their prophecied
Summer pride.

From the snowdrop learn ;
Not in her pale life lives she,
But in her blushing prophecy.
Thus be thy hopes,
Living but to yearn
Upwards to the hidden scopes ;—
Even within the urn
Let them burn !

Heroes of thy race—
Warriors with golden crowns,
Ghostly shapes with marbled frowns
Stare thee to stone ;
Matrons of thy race
Pass before thee making moan ;
Full of solemn grace
Is their pace.

Piteous their despair !
Piteous their looks forlorn !
Terrible their ghostly scorn !
Still hold thou fast ;—
Heed not their despair !—
Thou art thy future, not thy past ;
Let them glance and glare
Thro' the air.

Thou the ruin's bud,
Be not that moist rich-smelling weed
With its arras-sembled brede,
And ruin-haunting stalk ;
Thou the ruin's bud,
Be still the rose that lights the walk,
Mix thy fragrant blood
With the flood !

THE RAPE OF AURORA

NEVER, O never,
Since dewy sweet Flora
Was ravished by Zephyr,
Was such a thing heard
In the valleys so hollow!
Till rosy Aurora,
Uprising as ever,
Bright Phosphor to follow,
Pale Phoebe to sever,
Was caught like a bird
To the breast of Apollo!

Wildly she flutters,
And flushes all over
With passionate mutters
Of shame to the hush
Of his amorous whispers:
But O such a lover
Must win when he utters,
Thro' rosy red lispers,
The pains that discover
The wishes that gush
From the torches of Hesperus.

One finger just touching
The Orient chamber,
Unflooded the gushing

Of light that illumed
All her lustrous unveiling.
On clouds of glow amber,
Her limbs richly blushing,
She lay sweetly wailing,
In odours that gloomed
On the God as he bloomed
O'er her loveliness paling.

Great Pan in his covert
Beheld the rare glistening,
The cry of the love-hurt,
The sigh and the kiss
Of the latest close mingling :
But love, thought he, listening,
Will not do a dove hurt,
I know,—and a tingling,
Latent with bliss,
Prickt thro' him, I wis,
For the Nymph he was singling.

SOUTH-WEST WIND IN THE WOODLAND

THE silence of preluded song—
Æolian silence charms the woods ;
Each tree a harp, whose foliaged strings
Are waiting for the master's touch
To sweep them into storms of joy,
Stands mute and whispers not ; the birds
Brood dumb in their foreboding nests,
Save here and there a chirp or tweet,
That utters fear or anxious love,
Or when the ouzel sends a swift
Half warble, shrinking back again
His golden bill, or when aloud
The storm-cock warns the dusking hills
And villages and valleys round :
For lo, beneath those ragged clouds
That skirt the opening west, a stream
Of yellow light and windy flame
Spreads lengthening southward, and the sky
Begins to gloom, and o'er the ground
A moan of coming blasts creeps low
And rustles in the crisping grass ;
Till suddenly with mighty arms
Outspread, that reach the horizon round,
The great South-West drives o'er the earth,
And loosens all his roaring robes
Behind him, over heath and moor.
He comes upon the neck of night,

Like one that leaps a fiery steed
Whose keen black haunches quivering shine
With eagerness and haste, that needs
No spur to make the dark leagues fly !
Whose eyes are meteors of speed ;
Whose mane is as a flashing foam ;
Whose hoofs are travelling thunder-shocks ;—
He comes, and while his growing gusts,
Wild couriers of his reckless course,
Are whistling from the daggered gorse,
And hurrying over fern and broom,
Midway, far off, he feigns to halt
And gather in his streaming train.

Now, whirring like an eagle's wing
Preparing for a wide blue flight ;
Now, flapping like a sail that tacks
And chides the wet bewildered mast ;
Now, screaming like an anguish'd thing
Chased close by some down-breathing beak ;
Now, wailing like a breaking heart,
That will not wholly break, but hopes
With hope that knows itself in vain ;
Now, threatening like a storm-charged cloud ;
Now, cooing like a woodland dove ;
Now, up again in roar and wrath
High soaring and wide sweeping ; now,
With sudden fury dashing down
Full-force on the awaiting woods.

Long waited there, for aspens frail
That tinkle with a silver bell,
To warn the Zephyr of their love,
When danger is at hand, and wake
The neighbouring boughs, surrendering all

Their prophet harmony of leaves,
Had caught his earliest windward thought,
And told it trembling ; naked birk
Down showering her dishevelled hair,
And like a beauty yielding up
Her fate to all the elements,
Had swayed in answer ; hazels close,
Thick brambles and dark brushwood tufts,
And briared brakes that line the dells
With shaggy beetling brows, had sung
Shrill music, while the tattered flaws
Tore over them, and now the whole
Tumultuous concords, seized at once
With savage inspiration,—pine,
And larch, and beech, and fir, and thorn,
And ash, and oak, and oakling, rave
And shriek, and shout, and whirl, and toss,
And stretch their arms, and split, and crack,
And bend their stems, and bow their heads,
And grind, and groan, and lion-like
Roar to the echo-peopled hills
And ravenous wilds, and crake-like cry
With harsh delight, and cave-like call
With hollow mouth, and harp-like thrill
With mighty melodies, sublime,
From clumps of column'd pines that wave
A lofty anthem to the sky,
Fit music for a prophet's soul—
And like an ocean gathering power,
And murmuring deep, while down below
Reigns calm profound ;—not trembling now
The aspens, but like freshening waves
That fall upon a shingly beach ;—
And round the oak a solemn roll
Of organ harmony ascends,

And in the upper foliage sounds
A symphony of distant seas.

The voice of nature is abroad
This night ; she fills the air with balm ;
Her mystery is o'er the land ;
And who that hears her now and yields
His being to her yearning tones,
And seats his soul upon her wings,
And broadens o'er the wind-swept world
With her, will gather in the flight
More knowledge of her secret, more
Delight in her beneficence,
Than hours of musing, or the lore
That lives with men could ever give !
Nor will it pass away when morn
Shall look upon the lulling leaves,
And woodland sunshine, Eden-sweet,
Dreams o'er the paths of peaceful shade ;—
For every elemental power
Is kindred to our hearts, and once
Acknowledged, wedded, once embraced,
Once taken to the unfettered sense,
Once claspt into the naked life,
The union is eternal.

WILL O' THE WISP

Follow me, follow me,
Over brake and under tree,
Thro' the bosky tanglery,
Brushwood and bramble!
Follow me, follow me,
Laugh and leap and scramble!
Follow, follow,
Hill and hollow,
Fosse and burrow,
Fen and furrow,
Down into the bulrush beds,
'Midst the reeds and osier heads,
In the rushy soaking damps,
Where the vapours pitch their camps,
Follow me, follow me,
For a midnight ramble!
O! what a mighty fog,
What a merry night O ho!
Follow, follow, nigher, nigher—
Over bank, and pond, and briar,
Down into the croaking ditches,
Rotten log,
Spotted frog,
Beetle bright
With crawling light,
What a joy O ho!
Deep into the purple bog—
What a joy O ho!

Where like hosts of puckered witches
All the shivering agues sit
Warming hands and chafing feet,
By the blue marsh-hovering oils :
O the fools for all their moans !
Not a forest mad with fire
Could still their teeth, or warm their bones,
Or loose them from their chilly coils.
What a clatter,
How they chatter !
Shrink and huddle,
All a muddle !
What a joy O ho !
Down we go, down we go,
What a joy O ho !
Soon shall I be down below,
Plunging with a grey fat friar,
Hither, thither, to and fro,
Breathing mists and whisking lamps,
Plashing in the shiny swamps ;
While my cousin Lantern Jack,
With cock ears and cunning eyes,
Turns him round upon his back,
Daubs him oozy green and black,
Sits upon his rolling size,
Where he lies, where he lies,
Groaning full of sack—
Staring with his great round eyes !
What a joy O ho !
Sits upon him in the swamps
Breathing mists and whisking lamps !
What a joy O ho !
Such a lad is Lantern Jack,
When he rides the black nightmare
Through the fens, and puts a glare

In the friar's track.
Such a frolic lad, good lack!
To turn a friar on his back,
Trip him, clip him, whip him, nip him.
Lay him sprawling, smack!
Such a lad is Lantern Jack!
Such a tricksy lad, good lack!
What a joy O ho!
Follow me, follow me,
Where he sits, and you shall see!

SONG

Fair and false ! No dawn will greet
Thy waking beauty as of old ;
The little flower beneath thy feet
Is alien to thy smile so cold ;
The merry bird flown up to meet
Young morning from his nest i' the wheat
Scatters his joy to wood and wold,
But scorns the arrogance of gold.

False and fair ! I scarce know why,
But standing in the lonely air,
And underneath the blessed sky,
I plead for thee in my despair ;—
For thee cut off, both heart and eye
From living truth ; thy spring quite dry ;
For thee, that heaven my thought may share,
Forget—how false ! and think—how fair !

SONG

Two wedded lovers watched the rising moon,
That with her strange mysterious beauty glowing,
Over misty hills and waters flowing,
Crowned the long twilight loveliness of June :
And thus in me, and thus in me, they spake,
The solemn secret of first love did wake.

Above the hills the blushing orb arose ;
Her shape encircled by a radiant bower,
In which the nightingale with charméd power
Poured forth enchantment o'er the dark repose :
And thus in me, and thus in me, they said,
Earth's mists did with the sweet new spirit wed.

Far up the sky with ever purer beam,
Upon the throne of night the moon was seated,
And down the valley glens the shades retreated,
And silver light was on the open stream.
And thus in me, and thus in me, they sighed,
Aspiring Love has hallowed Passion's tide.

SONG

I CANNOT lose thee for a day,
But like a bird with restless wing
My heart will find thee far away,
And on thy bosom fall and sing,
My nest is here, my rest is here ;—
And in the lull of wind and rain,
Fresh voices make a sweet refrain,
'His rest is there, his nest is there.'

With thee the wind and sky are fair,
But parted, both are strange and dark ;
And treacherous the quiet air
That holds me singing like a lark,
O shield my love, strong arm above !
Till in the hush of wind and rain,
Fresh voices make a rich refrain,
'The arm above will shield thy love.'

DAPHNE

Musing on the fate of Daphne,
Many feelings urged my breast,
For the God so keen desiring,
And the Nymph so deep distrest.

Never flashed thro' sylvan valley
Visions so divinely fair!
He with early ardour glowing,
She with rosy anguish rare.

Only still more sweet and lovely
For those terrors on her brows,
Those swift glances wild and brilliant,
Those delicious panting vows.

Timidly the timid shoulders
Shrinking from the fervid hand!
Dark the tide of hair back-flowing
From the blue-veined temples bland!

Lovely, too, divine Apollo
In the speed of his pursuit;
With his eye an azure lustre,
And his voice a summer lute!

Looking like some burnished eagle
Hovering o'er a fluttered bird;
Not unseen of silver Naiad,
And of wistful Dryad heard!

Many a morn the naked beauty
Saw her bright reflection drown
In the flowing smooth-faced river,
While the god came sheening down.

Down from Pindus bright Peneus
Tells its muse-melodious source ;
Sacred is its fountained birthplace,
And the Orient floods its course.

Many a morn the sunny darling
Saw the rising chariot-rays,
From the winding river-reaches,
Mellowing in amber haze.

Thro' the flaming mountain gorges
Lo, the River leaps the plain ;
Like a wild god-stridden courser,
Tossing high its foamy mane.

Then he swims thro' laurelled sunlight,
Full of all sensations sweet,
Misty with his morning incense,
To the mirrored maiden's feet !

Wet and bright the dinting pebbles
Shine where oft she paused and stood ;
All her dreamy warmth revolving,
While the chilly waters wooed.

Like to rosy-born Aurora,
Glowing freshly into view,
When her doubtful foot she ventures
On the first cold morning blue.

White as that Thessalian lily,
Fairest Tempe's fairest flower,
Lo, the tall Peneïan virgin
Stands beneath her bathing bower.

There the laurell'd wreaths o'erarching
Crown'd the dainty shuddering maid ;
There the dark prophetic laurel
Kiss'd her with its sister shade.

There the young green glistening leaflets
Hush'd with love their breezy peal ;
There the little opening flowerets
Blush'd beneath her vermeil heel !

There among the conscious arbours
Sounds of soft tumultuous wail,
Mysteries of love, melodious,
Came upon the lyric gale !

Breathings of a deep enchantment,
Effluence of immortal grace,
Flitted round her faltering footstep,
Spread a balm about her face !

Witless of the enamour'd presence,
Like a dreamy lotus bud
From its drowsy stem down-drooping,
Gazed she in the glowing flood.

Softly sweet with fluttering presage,
Felt she that ethereal sense,
Drinking charms of love delirious,
Reaping bliss of love intense !

All the air was thrill'd with sunrise,
Birds made music of her name,
And the god-impregnate water
Claspt her image ere she came.

Richer for that glance unconscious !
Dearer for that soft dismay !
And the sudden self-possession !
And the smile as bright as day !

Plunging 'mid her scattered tresses,
With her blue invoking eyes ;
See her like a star descending !
Like a rosebud see her rise !

Like a rosebud in the morning
Dashing off its jewell'd dews,
Ere unfolding all its fragrance
It is gathered by the muse !

Beauteous in the foamy laughter
Bubbling round her shrinking waist,
Lo ! from locks and lips and eyelids
Rain the glittering pearl-drops chaste !

And about the maiden rapture
Still the ruddy ripples play'd,
Ebbing round in startled circlets
When her arms began to wade ;

Flowing in like tides attracted
To the glowing crescent shine !
Clasping her ambrosial whiteness
Like an Autumn-tinted vine !

Sinking low with love's emotion!
Levying with look and tone
All love's rosy arts to mimic
Cytherea's magic zone!

Trembling up with adoration
To the crimson daisy tip
Budding from the snowy bosom—
Fainter than the rose-red lip!

Rising in a storm of wavelets,
That for shelter, feigning fright,
Prest to those twin-heaving havens,
Harbour'd there beneath her light;

Gleaming in a whirl of eddies
Round her lucid throat and neck;
Eddying in a gleam of dimples
Up against her bloomy cheek;

Bribing all the breezy water
With rich warmth, the nymph to keep
In a self-imprison'd plaisance,
Tempting her from deep to deep.

Till at last delirious passion
Thrill'd the god to wild excess,
And the fervour of a moment
Made divinity confess;

And he stood in all his glory!
But so radiant, being near,
That her eyes were frozen on him
In a fascinated fear!

All with orient splendour shining,
All with roseate birth aglow,
Gleam'd the golden god before her,
With his golden crescent bow.

Soon the dazzled light subsided,
And he seem'd a beauteous youth,
Form'd to gain the maiden's murmurs,
And to pledge the vows of truth.

Ah ! that thus he had continued !
O, that such for her had been !
Graceful with all godlike beauty,
But so humanly serene !

Cheeks, and mouth, and mellow ringlets,
Bounteous as the mid-day beam ;
Pleading looks and wistful tremour,
Tender as a maiden's dream !

Palms that like a bird's throbb'd bosom
Palpitate with eagerness,
Lips, the bridals of the roses,
Dewy sweet from the caress !

Lips and limbs, and eyes and ringlets,
Swaying, praying to one prayer,
Like a lyre, swept by a spirit,
In the still, enraptur'd air.

Like a lyre in some far valley,
Uttering ravishments divine !
All its strings to viewless fingers
Yearning, modulations fine !

Yearning with melodious fervour !
Like a beauteous maiden flower,
When the young beloved three paces
Hovers from the bridal bower.

Throbbing thro' the dawning stillness !
As a heart within a breast,
When the young beloved is stepping
Radiant to the nuptial nest.

O for Daphne ! gentle Daphne !
Ever warmer by degrees
Whispers full of hopes and visions
Throng her ears like honey bees !

Never yet was lonely blossom
Woo'd with such delicious voice !
Never since hath mortal maiden
Dwelt on such celestial choice !

Love-suffused she quivers, falters—
Falters, sighs, but never speaks,
All her rosy blood up-gushing
Overflows her ripe young cheeks.

Blushing, sweet with virgin blushes,
All her loveliness a-flame,
Stands she in the orient waters,
Stricken o'er with speechless shame !

Ah ! but lovelier, ever lovelier,
As more deep the colour glows,
And the honey-laden lily
Changes to the fragrant rose.

While the god with meek embraces,
Whispering all his sacred charms,
Softly folds her, gently holds her,
In his white encircling arms !

But, O Dian ! veil not wholly
Thy pale crescent from the morn !
Vanish not, O virgin goddess,
With that look of pallid scorn !

Still thy pure protecting influence
Shed from those fair watchful eyes !—
Lo ! her angry orb has vanished,
And the bright sun thrones the skies !

Voicelessly the forest Virgin
Vanished ! but one look she gave—
Keen as Niobean arrow
Thro' the maiden's heart it drave.

Thus toward that throning bosom
Where all earth is warmed,—each spot
Nourished with autumnal blessings—
Icy chill was Daphne caught.

Icy chill ! but swift revulsion
All her gentler self renewed,
Even as icy Winter quickens
With bud-opening warmth imbued.

Even as a torpid brooklet,
That to the night-gleaming moon
Flashed in turn the frozen glances,
Melts upon the breast of noon.

But no more—O never, never,
Turns she to that bosom bright,
Swiftly all her senses counsel,
All her nerves are strung to flight.

O'er the brows of radiant Pindus
Rolls a shadow dark and cold,
And a sound of lamentation
Issues from its mournful fold.

Voice of the far-sighted Muses !
Cry of keen foreboding song !
Every cleft of startled Tempe
Tingles with it sharp and long.

Over bourn and bosk and dingle,
Over rivers, over rills,
Runs the sad subservient Echo
Toward the dim blue distant hills !

And another and another !
'Tis a cry more wild than all ;
And the hills with muffled voices
Answer ' Daphne ! ' to the call.

And another and another !
'Tis a cry so wildly sweet,
That her charmed heart turns rebel
To the instinct of her feet ;

And she pauses for an instant ;
But his arms have scarcely slid
Round her waist in cestian girdles,
And his low voluptuous lid

Lifted pleading, and the honey
Of his mouth for hers athirst,
Ruby glistening, raised for moisture—
Like a bud that waits to burst

In the sweet espousing showers—
And his tongue has scarce begun
With its inarticulate burthen,
And the clouds scarce show the sun

As it pierces thro' a crevice
Of the mass that closed it o'er,
When again the horror flashes—
And she turns to flight once more !

And again o'er radiant Pindus
Rolls the shadow dark and cold,
And the sound of lamentation
Issues from its sable fold !

And again the light winds chide her
As she darts from his embrace—
And again the far-voiced echoes
Speak their tidings of the chase.

Loudly now as swiftly, swiftly,
O'er the glimmering sands she speeds ;
Wildly now as in the furzes
From the piercing spikes she bleeds.

Deeply and with direful anguish,
As above each crimson drop
Passion checks the god Apollo,
And love bids him weep and stop.—

He above each drop of crimson
Shadowing—like the laurel leaf
That above himself will shadow—
Sheds a fadeless look of grief.

Then with love's remorseful discord,
With its own desire at war,
Sighing turns, while dimly fleeting
Daphne flies the chase afar.

But all nature is against her !
Pan, with all his sylvan troop,
Thro' the vista'd woodland valleys
Blocks her course with cry and whoop !

In the twilights of the thickets
Trees bend down their gnarled boughs,
Wild green leaves and low curved branches
Hold her hair and beat her brows.

Many a brake of brushwood covert,
Where cold darkness slumbers mute,
Slips a shrub to thwart her passage,
Slides a hand to clutch her foot.

Glens and glades of lushest verdure
Toil her in their tawny mesh,
Wilder-woofed ways and alleys
Lock her struggling limbs in leash.

Feathery grasses, flowery mosses,
Knot themselves to make her trip ;
Sprays and stubborn sprigs outstretching
Put a bridle on her lip ;

Many a winding lane betrays her,
Many a sudden bosky shoot,
And her knee makes many a stumble
O'er some hidden damp old root,

Whose quaint face peers green and dusky
'Mongst the matted growth of plants,
While she rises wild and weltering,
Speeding on with many pants.

Tangles of the wild red strawberry
Spread their freckled trammels frail ;
In the pathway creeping brambles
Catch her in their thorny trail.

All the widely sweeping greensward
Shifts and swims from knoll to knoll ;
Grey rough-fingered oak and elm wood
Push her by from bole to bole.

Groves of lemon, groves of citron,
Tall high-foliaged plane and palm,
Bloomy myrtle, light-blue olive,
Wave her back with gusts of balm.

Languid jasmine, scrambling briony,
Walls of close-festooning braid,
Fling themselves about her, mingling
With her wafted locks, waylaid.

Twisting bindweed, honey'd woodbine,
Cling to her, while, red and blue,
On her rounded form ripe berries
Dash and die in gory dew.

Running ivies dark and lingering
Round her light limbs drag and twine ;
Round her waist with languorous tendrils
Reels and wreathes the juicy vine ;

Reining in the flying creature
With its arms about her mouth ;
Bursting all its mellowing bunches
To seduce her husky drouth ;

Crowning her with amorous clusters ;
Pouring down her sloping back
Fresh-born wines in glittering rillets,
Following her in crimson track.

Buried, drenched in dewy foliage,
Thus she glimmers from the dawn,
Watched by every forest creature,
Fleet-foot Oread, frolic Faun.

Silver-sandalled Arethusa
Not more swiftly fled the sands,
Fled the plains and fled the sunlights,
Fled the murmuring ocean strands.

O, that now the earth would open !
O, that now the shades would hide !
O, that now the gods would shelter !
Caverns lead and seas divide !

Not more faint soft-lowing Io
Panted in those starry eyes,
When the sleepless midnight meadows
Piteously implored the skies !

Still her breathless flight she urges
By the sanctuary stream,
And the god with golden swiftness
Follows like an eastern beam.

Her the close bewildering greenery
Darkens with its duskiest green,—
Him each little leaflet welcomes,
Flushing with an orient sheen.

Thus he nears, and now all Tempe
Rings with his melodious cry,
Avenues and blue expanses
Beam in his large lustrous eye!

All the branches start to music!
As if from a secret spring
Thousands of sweet bills are bubbling
In the nest and on the wing.

Gleams and shines the glassy river
And rich valleys every one;
But of all the throbbing beauty
Brightest! singled by the sun!

Ivy round her glimmering ancle,
Vine about her glowing brow,
Never sure was bride so beauteous,
Daphne, chosen nymph, as thou!

Thus he nears! and now she feels him
Breathing hot on every limb;
And he hears her own quick pantings—
Ah! that they might be for him.

O, that like the flower he tramples,
Bending from his golden tread,
Full of fair celestial ardours,
She would bow her bridal head.

O, that like the flower she presses,
Nodding from her lily touch,
Light as in the harmless breezes,
She would know the god for such !

See ! the golden arms are round her—
To the air she grasps and clings !
See ! his glowing arms have wound her—
To the sky she shrieks and springs !

See ! the flushing chace of Tempe
Trembles with Olympian air—
See ! green sprigs and buds are shooting
From those white raised arms of prayer !

In the earth her feet are rooting !—
Breasts and limbs and lifted eyes,
Hair and lips and stretching fingers,
Fade away—and fadeless rise.

And the god whose fervent rapture
Clasps her finds his close embrace
Full of palpitating branches,
And new leaves that bud apace,

Round his wonder-stricken forehead ;—
While in ebbing measures slow
Sounds of softly dying pulses
Pause and quiver, pause and go ;

Go, and come again, and flutter
On the verge of life,—then flee !
All the white ambrosial beauty
Is a lustrous Laurel Tree !

Still with the great panting love-chase
All its running sap is warmed ;—
But from head to foot the virgin
Is transfigured and transformed.

Changed !—yet the green Dryad nature
Is instinct with human ties,
And above its anguish'd lover
Breathes pathetic sympathies ;

Sympathies of love and sorrow ;
Joy in her divine escape ;
Breathing through her bursting foliage
Comfort to his bending shape.

Vainly now the floating Naiads
Seek to pierce the laurel maze,
Nought but laurel meets their glances,
Laurel glistens as they gaze.

Nought but bright prophetic laurel !
Laurel over eyes and brows,
Over limbs and over bosom,
Laurel leaves and laurel boughs !

And in vain the listening Dryad
Shells her hand against her ear !—
All is silence—save the echo
Travelling in the distance drear.

LONDON BY LAMPLIGHT

THERE stands a singer in the street,
He has an audience motley and meet ;
Above him lowers the London night,
And around the lamps are flaring bright.

His minstrelsy may be unchaste—
'Tis much unto that motley taste,
And loud the laughter he provokes
From those sad slaves of obscene jokes.

But woe is many a passer by
Who as he goes turns half an eye,
To see the human form divine
Thus Circe-wise changed into swine !

Make up the sum of either sex
That all our human hopes perplex,
With those unhappy shapes that know
The silent streets and pale cock-crow.

And can I trace in such dull eyes
Of fireside peace or country skies ?
And could those haggard cheeks presume
To memories of a May-tide bloom ?

Those violated forms have been
The pride of many a flowering green ;
And still the virgin bosom heaves
With daisy meads and dewy leaves.

But stygian darkness reigns within
The river of death from the founts of sin ;
And one prophetic water rolls
Its gas-lit surface for their souls.

I will not hide the tragic sight—
Those drown'd black locks, those dead lips white,
Will rise from out the slimy flood,
And cry before God's throne for blood !

Those stiffened limbs, that swollen face,—
Pollution's last and best embrace,
Will call, as such a picture can,
For retribution upon man.

Hark ! how their feeble laughter rings,
While still the ballad-monger sings,
And flatters their unhappy breasts
With poisonous words and pungent jests.

O how would every daisy blush
To see them 'mid that earthy crush !
O dumb would be the evening thrush,
And hoary look the hawthorn bush !

The meadows of their infancy
Would shrink from them, and every tree,
And every little laughing spot,
Would hush itself and know them not.

Precursor to what black despairs
Was that child's face which once was theirs !
And O to what a world of guile
Was herald that young angel smile !

That face which to a father's eye
Was balm for all anxiety ;
That smile which to a mother's heart
Went swifter than the swallow's dart !

O happy homes ! that still they know
At intervals, with what a woe
Would ye look on them, dim and strange,
Suffering worse than winter change !

And yet could I transplant them there,
To breathe again the innocent air
Of youth, and once more reconcile
Their outcast looks with nature's smile ;

Could I but give them one clear day
Of this delicious loving May,
Release their souls from anguish dark,
And stand them underneath the lark ;—

I think that Nature would have power
To graft again her blighted flower
Upon the broken stem, renew
Some portion of its early hue ;—

The heavy flood of tears unlock,
More precious than the Scriptured rock ;
At least instil a happier mood,
And bring them back to womanhood.

Alas ! how many lost ones claim
This refuge from despair and shame !
How many, longing for the light,
Sink deeper in the abyss this night !

O, crying sin ! O, blushing thought !
Not only unto those that wrought
The misery and deadly blight ;
But those that outcast them this night !

O, agony of grief ! for who
Less dainty than his race, will do
Such battle for their human right,
As shall awake this startled night ?

Proclaim this evil human page
Will ever blot the Golden Age
That poets dream and saints invite,
If it be unredeemed this night ?

This night of deep solemnity,
And verdurous serenity,
While over every fleecy field
The dews descend and odours yield.

This night of gleaming floods and falls,
Of forest glooms and sylvan calls,
Of starlight on the pebbly rills,
And twilight on the circling hills.

This night ! when from the paths of men
Grey error steams as from a fen ;
As o'er this flaring City wreathes
The black cloud-vapour that it breathes !

This night from which a morn will spring
Blooming on its orient wing ;
A morn to roll with many more
Its ghostly foam on the twilight shore.

Morn ! when the fate of all mankind
Hangs poised in doubt, and man is blind.
His duties of the day will seem
The fact of life, and mine the dream :

The destinies that bards have sung,
Regeneration to the young,
Reverberation of the truth,
And virtuous culture unto youth !

Youth ! in whose season let abound
All flowers and fruits that strew the ground,
Voluptuous joy where love consents,
And health and pleasure pitch their tents :

All rapture and all pure delight ;
A garden all unknown to blight ;
But never the unnatural sight
That throngs the shameless song this night !

SONG

Under boughs of breathing May,
In the mild spring-time I lay,
Lonely, for I had no love ;
And the sweet birds all sang for pity,
Cuckoo, lark, and dove.

Tell me, cuckoo, then I cried,
Dare I woo and wed a bride ?
I, like thee, have no home-nest ;
And the twin notes thus tuned their ditty,—
'Love can answer best.'

Nor, warm dove with tender coo,
Have I thy soft voice to woo,
Even were a damsel by ;
And the deep woodland crooned its ditty,—
'Love her first and try.'

Nor have I, wild lark, thy wing,
That from bluest heaven can bring
Bliss, whatever fate befall ;
And the sky-lyrist trilled this ditty,—
'Love will give thee all.'

So it chanced while June was young,
Wooing well with fervent song,
I had won a damsel coy ;
And the sweet birds that sang for pity,
Jubileed for joy.

PASTORALS

I

How sweet on sunny afternoons,
For those who journey light and well,
To loiter up a hilly rise
Which hides the prospect far beyond,
And fancy all the landscape lying
Beautiful and still ;

Beneath a sky of summer blue,
Whose rounded cloudlets, folded soft,
Gaze on the scene which we await
And picture from their peacefulness ;
So calmly to the earth inclining
Float those loving shapes !

Like airy brides, each singling out
A spot to love and bless with love,
Their creamy bosoms glowing warm,
Till distance weds them to the hills,
And with its latest gleam the river
Sinks in their embrace.

And silverly the river runs,
And many a graceful wind he makes,
By fields where feed the happy flocks,
And hedge-rows hushing pleasant lanes,
The charms of English home reflected
In his shining eye :

Ancestral oak, broad-foliaged elm,
Rich meadows sunned and starred with flowers,
The cottage breathing tender smoke
Against the brooding golden air,
With glimpses of a stately mansion
On a woodland sward ;

And circling round, as with a ring,
The distance spreading amber haze,
Enclosing hills and pastures sweet ;
A depth of soft and mellow light
Which fills the heart with sudden yearning
Aimless and serene !

No disenchantment follows here,
For nature's inspiration moves
The dream which she herself fulfils ;
And he whose heart, like valley warmth,
Steams up with joy at scenes like this
Shall never be forlorn.

And O for any human soul
The rapture of a wide survey—
A valley sweeping to the West,
With all its wealth of loveliness,
Is more than recompense for days
That taught us to endure

II

Yon upland slope which hides the sun
Ascending from his eastern deeps,
And now against the hues of dawn
One level line of tillage rears ;
The furrowed brow of toil and time ;
To many it is but a sweep of land !

To others 'tis an Autumn trust,
But unto me a mystery ;—
An influence strange and swift as dreams ;
A whispering of old romance ;
A temple naked to the clouds ;
Or one of nature's bosoms fresh revealed,

Heaving with adoration ! there
The work of husbandry is done,
And daily bread is daily earned ;
Nor seems there ought to indicate
The springs which move in me such thoughts,
But from my soul a spirit calls them up.

All day into the open sky,
All night to the eternal stars,
For ever both at morn and eve
When mellow distances draw near,
And shadows lengthen in the dusk,
Athwart the heavens it rolls its glimmering line !

When twilight from the dream-hued West
Sighs hush ! and all the land is still ;

When, from the lush empurpling East,
The twilight of the crowing cock
Peers on the drowsy village roofs,
Athwart the heavens that glimmering line is seen.

And now beneath the rising sun,
Whose shining chariot overpeers
The irradiate ridge, while fetlock deep
In the rich soil his coursers plunge—
How grand in robes of light it looks !
How glorious with rare suggestive grace !

The ploughman mounting up the height
Becomes a glowing shape, as though
'Twere young Triptolemus, plough in hand,
While Ceres in her amber scarf
With gentle love directs him how
To wed the willing earth and hope for fruits !

The furrows running up are fraught
With meanings ; there the goddess walks,
While Proserpine is young, and there—
'Mid the late autumn sheaves, her voice
Sobbing and choked with dumb despair—
The nights will hear her wailing for her child !

Whatever dim tradition tells,
Whatever history may reveal,
Or fancy, from her starry brows,
Of light or dreamful lustre shed,
Could not at this sweet time increase
The quiet consecration of the spot.

Blest with the sweat of labour, blest
With the young sun's first vigorous beams,
Village hope and harvest prayer,—
The heart that throbs beneath it holds
A bliss so perfect in itself
Men's thoughts must borrow rather than bestow.

III

Now standing on this hedgeside path,
Up which the evening winds are blowing
Wildly from the lingering lines
Of sunset o'er the hills ;
Unaided by one motive thought,
My spirit with a strange impulsion
Rises, like a fledgling,
Whose wings are not mature, but still
Supported by its strong desire
Beats up its native air and leaves
The tender mother's nest.

Great music under heaven is made,
And in the track of rushing darkness
Comes the solemn shape of night,
And broods above the earth.
A thing of Nature am I now,
Abroad, without a sense or feeling
Born not of her bosom ;
Content with all her truths and fates ;
Ev'n as yon strip of grass that bows
Above the new-born violet bloom,
And sings with wood and field.

IV

Lo, as a tree, whose wintry twigs
Drink in the sun with fibrous joy,
And down into its dampest roots
Thrills quickened with the draught of life,
I wake unto the dawn, and leave my griefs to drowse.

I rise and drink the fresh sweet air :
Each draught a future bud of Spring ;
Each glance of blue a birth of green ;
I will not mimic yonder oak
That dallies with dead leaves ev'n while the primrose peeps.

But full of these warm-whispering beams,
Like Memnon in his mother's eye,—
Aurora ! when the statue stone
Moaned soft to her pathetic touch,—
My soul shall own its parent in the founts of day !

And ever in the recurring light,
True to the primal joy of dawn,
Forget its barren griefs ; and aye
Like aspens in the faintest breeze
Turn all its silver sides and tremble into song.

V

Now from the meadow floods the wild duck clamours,
Now the wood pigeon wings a rapid flight,
Now the homeward rookery follows up its vanguard,
And the valley mists are curling up the hills.

Three short songs gives the clear-voiced throstle,
Sweetening the twilight ere he fills the nest ;
While the little bird upon the leafless branches
Tweets to its mate a tiny loving note.

Deeper the stillness hangs on every motion ;
Calmer the silence follows every call ;
Now all is quiet save the roosting pheasant,
The bell-wether's tinkle and the watch-dog's bark.

Softly shine the lights from the silent kindling homestead,
Stars of the hearth to the shepherd in the fold ;
Springs of desire to the traveller on the roadway ;
Ever breathing incense to the ever-blessing sky !

VI

How barren would this valley be,
Without the golden orb that gazes
On it, broadening to hues
Of rose, and spreading wings of amber ;
Blessing it before it falls asleep.

How barren would this valley be,
Without the human lives now beating
In it, or the throbbing hearts
Far distant, who their flower of childhood
Cherish here, and water it with tears !

How barren should I be, were I
Without above that loving splendour,
Shedding light and warmth ! without
Some kindred natures of my kind
To joy in me, or yearn towards me now !

VII

SUMMER glows warm on the meadows, and speedwell, and gold-cups, and daisies
Darken 'mid deepening masses of sorrel, and shadowy grasses
Show the ripe hue to the farmer, and summon the scythe and the hay-makers
Down from the village ; and now, even now, the air smells of the mowing,
And the sharp song of the scythe whistles daily ; from dawn, till the gloaming
Wears its cool star, sweet and welcome to all flaming faces afield now ;
Heavily weighs the hot season, and drowses the darkening foliage,
Drooping with languor ; the white cloud floats, but sails not, for windless
Heaven's blue tents it ; no lark singing up in its fleecy white valleys ;
Up in its fairy white valleys, once feathered with minstrels, melodious
With the invisible joy that wakes dawn o'er the green fields of England.
Summer glows warm on the meadows ; then come, let us roam thro' them gaily,
Heedless of heat, and the hot-kissing sun, and the fear of dark freckles.
Never one kiss will he give on a neck, or a lily-white forehead,
Chin, hand, or bosom uncovered, all panting, to take the chance coolness,
But full sure the fiery pressure leaves seal of espousal.

Heed him not ; come, tho' he kiss till the soft little upper-
lip loses
Half its pure whiteness ; just speck'd where the curve of
the rosy mouth reddens.

Come, let him kiss, let him kiss, and his kisses shall make
thee the sweeter.
Thou art no nun, veiled and vowed ; doomed to nourish a
withering pallor !
City exotics beside thee would show like bleached linen
at mid-day,
Hung upon hedges of eglantine ! Thou in the freedom of
nature,
Full of her beauty and wisdom, gentleness, joyance, and
kindness !
Come, and like bees will we gather the rich golden honey
of noontide ;
Deep in the sweet summer meadows, border'd by hillside
and river,
Lined with long trenches half-hidden, where smell of white
meadow-sweet, sweetest,
Blissfully hovers—O sweetest ! but pluck it not ! even in
the tenderest
Grasp it will lose breath and wither ; like many, not made
for a posy.

See, the sun slopes down the meadows, where all the
flowers are falling !
Falling unhymned ; for the nightingale scarce ever
charms the long twilight :
Mute with the cares of the nest ; only known by a ' chuck,
chuck,' and dovelike
Call of content, but the finch and the linnet and blackcap
pipe loudly.
Round on the western hill-side warbles the rich-billed ouzel ;

And the shrill throstle is filling the tangled thickening copses ;
Singing o'er hyacinths hid, and most honey'd of flowers, white field-rose.
Joy thus to revel all day in the grass of our own beloved country ;
Revel all day, till the lark mounts at eve with his sweet ' tirra-lirra ' :
Trilling delightfully. See, on the river the slow-rippled surface
Shining ; the slow ripple broadens in circles ; the bright surface smoothens ;
Now it is flat as the leaves of the yet unseen water-lily.
There dart the lives of a day, ever-varying tactics fantastic.
There, by the wet-mirrored osiers, the emerald wing of the kingfisher
Flashes, the fish in his beak ! there the dab-chick dived, and the motion
Lazily undulates all thro' the tall standing army of rushes.

Joy thus to revel all day, till the twilight turns us homeward !
Till all the lingering deep-blooming splendour of sunset is over,
And the one star shines mildly in mellowing hues, like a spirit
Sent to assure us that light never dieth, tho' day is now buried.
Saying : to-morrow, to-morrow, few hours intervening, that interval
Tuned by the woodlark in heaven, to-morrow my semblance, far eastward,
Heralds the day 'tis my mission eternal to seal and to prophecy.

Come then, and homeward ; passing down the close path
of the meadows.
Home like the bees stored with sweetness ; each with a
lark in the bosom,
Trilling for ever, and oh ! will yon lark ever cease to sing
up there ?

TO A SKYLARK

O SKYLARK ! I see thee and call thee joy !
Thy wings bear thee up to the breast of the dawn ;
I see thee no more, but thy song is still
The tongue of the heavens to me !

Thus are the days when I was a boy ;
Sweet while I lived in them, dear now they 're gone :
I feel them no longer, but still, O still
They tell of the heavens to me.

SONG

SPRING

When buds of palm do burst and spread
Their downy feathers in the lane,
And orchard blossoms, white and red,
Breathe Spring delight for Autumn gain ;
And the skylark shakes his wings in the rain ;

O then is the season to look for a bride !
Choose her warily, woo her unseen ;
For the choicest maids are those that hide
Like dewy violets under the green.

SONG

AUTUMN

When nuts behind the hazel-leaf
Are brown as the squirrel that hunts them free,
And the fields are rich with the sun-burnt sheaf,
'Mid the blue cornflower and the yellowing tree ;
And the farmer glows and beams in his glee ;

O then is the season to wed thee a bride !
Ere the garners are filled and the ale-cups foam ;
For a smiling hostess is the pride
And flower of every Harvest Home.

SORROWS AND JOYS

Bury thy sorrows, and they shall rise
As souls to the immortal skies,
And there look down like mothers' eyes.

But let thy joys be fresh as flowers,
That suck the honey of the showers,
And bloom alike on huts and towers.

So shall thy days be sweet and bright;
Solemn and sweet thy starry night,
Conscious of love each change of light.

The stars will watch the flowers asleep,
The flowers will feel the soft stars weep,
And both will mix sensations deep.

With these below, with those above,
Sits evermore the brooding dove,
Uniting both in bonds of love.

For both by nature are akin;
Sorrow, the ashen fruit of sin,
And joy, the juice of life within.

Children of earth are these; and those
The spirits of divine repose—
Death radiant o'er all human woes.

O, think what then had been thy doom,
If homeless and without a tomb
They had been left to haunt the gloom!

O, think again what now they are—
Motherly love, tho' dim and far,
Imaged in every lustrous star.

For they, in their salvation, know
No vestige of their former woe,
While thro' them all the heavens do flow.

Thus art thou wedded to the skies,
And watched by ever-loving eyes,
And warned by yearning sympathies.

SONG

The Flower unfolds its dawning cup,
And the young sun drinks the star-dews up,
At eve it droops with the bliss of day,
And dreams in the midnight far away.

So am I in thy sole, sweet glance
Pressed with a weight of utterance ;
Lovingly all my leaves unfold,
And gleam to the beams of thirsty gold.

At eve I droop, for then the swell
Of feeling falters forth farewell ;—
At midnight I am dreaming deep,
Of what has been, in blissful sleep.

When—ah ! when will love's own light
Wed me alike thro' day and night,
When will the stars with their linking charms
Wake us in each other's arms ?

SONG

Thou to me art such a spring
As the Arab seeks at eve,
Thirsty from the shining sands ;
There to bathe his face and hands,
While the sun is taking leave,
And dewy sleep is a delicious thing.

Thou to me art such a dream
As he dreams upon the grass,
While the bubbling coolness near
Makes sweet music in his ear ;
And the stars that slowly pass
In solitary grandeur o'er him gleam.

Thou to me art such a dawn
As the dawn whose ruddy kiss
Wakes him to his darling steed ;
And again the desert speed,
And again the desert bliss,
Lightens thro' his veins, and he is gone !

ANTIGONE

The buried voice bespake Antigone.

'O Sister! couldst thou know, as thou wilt know,
The bliss above, the reverence below,
Enkindled by thy sacrifice for me;
Thou wouldst at once with holy ecstasy
Give thy warm limbs into the yearning earth.
Sleep, Sister! for Elysium's dawning birth,—
And faith will fill thee with what is to be!
Sleep, for the Gods are watching over thee!
Thy dream will steer thee to perform their will,
As silently their influence they instil.
O Sister! in the sweetness of thy prime,
Thy hand has plucked the bitter flower of death;
But this will dower thee with Elysian breath,
That fade into a never-fading clime.
Dear to the Gods are those that do like thee
A solemn duty! for the tyranny
Of kings is feeble to the soul that dares
Defy them to fulfil its sacred cares:
And weak against a mighty will are men.
O, Torch between two brothers! in whose gleam
Our slaughtered House doth shine as one again,
Tho' severed by the sword; now may thy dream
Kindle desire in thee for us, and thou,
Forgetting not thy lover and his vow,
Leaving no human memory forgot,
Shalt cross, not unattended, the dark stream
Which runs by thee in sleep and ripples not.

The large stars glitter thro' the anxious night,
And the deep sky broods low to look at thee :
The air is hush'd and dark o'er land and sea,
And all is waiting for the morrow light :
So do thy kindred spirits wait for thee.
O Sister ! soft as on the downward rill,
Will those first daybeams from the distant hill
Fall on the smoothness of thy placid brow,
Like this calm sweetness breathing thro' me now :
And when the fated sounds shall wake thine eyes,
Wilt thou, confiding in the supreme will,
In all thy maiden steadfastness arise,
Firm to obey and earnest to fulfil ;
Remembering the night thou didst not sleep,
And this same brooding sky beheld thee creep,
Defiant of unnatural decree,
To where I lay upon the outcast land ;
Before the iron gates upon the plain ;
A wretched, graveless ghost, whose wailing chill
Came to thy darkened door imploring thee ;
Yearning for burial like my brother slain ;—
And all was dared for love and piety !
This thought will nerve again thy virgin hand
To serve its purpose and its destiny.'

She woke, they led her forth, and all was still.

SWATHED round in mist and crown'd with cloud,
O Mountain ! hid from peak to base—
Caught up into the heavens and clasped
In white ethereal arms that make
Thy mystery of size sublime !
What eye or thought can measure now
Thy grand dilating loftiness !
What giant crest dispute with thee
Supremacy of air and sky !
What fabled height with thee compare !
Not those vine-terraced hills that seethe
The lava in their fiery cusps ;
Nor that high-climbing robe of snow,
Whose summits touch the morning star,
And breathe the thinnest air of life ;
Nor crocus-couching Ida, warm
With Juno's latest nuptial lure ;
Nor Tenedos whose dreamy eye
Still looks upon beleaguered Troy ;
Nor yet Olympus crown'd with gods
Can boast a majesty like thine,
O Mountain ! hid from peak to base,
And image of the awful power
With which the secret of all things,
That stoops from heaven to garment earth,
Can speak to any human soul,
When once the earthly limits lose
Their pointed heights and sharpened lines,
And measureless immensity
Is palpable to sense and sight.

SONG

No, no, the falling blossom is no sign
Of loveliness destroy'd and sorrow mute ;
The blossom sheds its loveliness divine ;—
Its mission is to prophecy the fruit.

Nor is the day of love for ever dead,
When young enchantment and romance are gone ;
The veil is drawn, but all the future dread
Is lightened by the finger of the dawn.

Love moves with life along a darker way,
They cast a shadow and they call it death :
But rich is the fulfilment of their day ;
The purer passion and the firmer faith.

THE TWO BLACKBIRDS

A Blackbird in a wicker cage,
That hung and swung 'mid fruits and flowers,
Had learnt the song-charm, to assuage
The drearness of its wingless hours.

And ever when the song was heard,
From trees that shade the grassy plot
Warbled another glossy bird,
Whose mate not long ago was shot.

Strange anguish in that creature's breast,
Unwept like human grief, unsaid,
Has quickened in its lonely nest
A living impulse from the dead.

Not to console its own wild smart,—
But with a kindling instinct strong,
The novel feeling of its heart
Beats for the captive bird of song.

And when those mellow notes are still,
It hops from off its choral perch,
O'er path and sward, with busy bill,
All grateful gifts to peck and search.

Store of ouzel dainties choice
To those white swinging bars it brings ;
And with a low consoling voice
It talks between its fluttering wings.

Deeply in their bitter grief
Those sufferers reciprocate,
The one sings for its woodland life,
The other for its murdered mate.

But deeper doth the secret prove,
Uniting those sad creatures so ;
Humanity's great link of love,
The common sympathy of woe.

Well divined from day to day
Is the swift speech between them twain ;
For when the bird is scared away,
The captive bursts to song again.

Yet daily with its flattering voice,
Talking amid its fluttering wings,
Store of ouzel dainties choice
With busy bill the poor bird brings.

And shall I say, till weak with age
Down from its drowsy branch it drops,
It will not leave that captive cage,
Nor cease those busy searching hops ?

Ah, no ! the moral will not strain ;
Another sense will make it range,
Another mate will soothe its pain,
Another season work a change.

But thro' the live-long summer, tried,
A pure devotion we may see ;
The ebb and flow of Nature's tide ;
A self-forgetful sympathy.

JULY

I

Blue July, bright July,
Month of storms and gorgeous blue ;
Violet lightnings o'er thy sky,
Heavy falls of drenching dew ;
Summer crown ! o'er glen and glade
Shrinking hyacinths in their shade ;
I welcome thee with all thy pride,
I love thee like an Eastern bride.
Though all the singing days are done
As in those climes that clasp the sun ;
Though the cuckoo in his throat
Leaves to the dove his last twin note ;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Golden-dawning orientally,
Come with all thy shining blooms,
Thy rich red rose and rolling glooms.
Though the cuckoo doth but sing 'cuk, cuk,'
And the dove alone doth coo ;
Though the cushat spins her coo-r-roo, r-r-roo—
To the cuckoo's halting 'cuk.'

II

Sweet July, warm July !
Month when mosses near the stream,
Soft green mosses thick and shy,
Are a rapture and a dream.

Summer Queen ! whose foot the fern
Fades beneath while chestnuts burn ;
I welcome thee with thy fierce love,
Gloom below and gleam above.
    Though all the forest trees hang dumb,
    With dense leafiness o'ercome ;
    Though the nightingale and thrush,
    Pipe not from the bough or bush ;
Come to me with thy lustrous eye,
Azure-melting westerly,
The raptures of thy face unfold,
And welcome in thy robes of gold !
    Tho' the nightingale broods—'sweet-chuck-sweet '—
        And the ouzel flutes so chill,
    Tho' the throstle gives but one shrilly trill
        To the nightingale's 'sweet-sweet.'

SONG

I WOULD I were the drop of rain
That falls into the dancing rill,
For I should seek the river then,
And roll below the wooded hill,
Until I reached the sea.

And O, to be the river swift
That wrestles with the wilful tide,
And fling the briny weeds aside
That o'er the foamy billows drift,
Until I came to thee!

I would that after weary strife,
And storm beneath the piping wind,
The current of my true fresh life
Might come unmingled, unimbrined,
To where thou floatest free.

Might find thee in some amber clime,
Where sunlight dazzles on the sail,
And dreaming of our plighted vale
Might seal the dream, and bless the time,
With maiden kisses three.

SONG

Come to me in any shape !
As a victor crown'd with vine,
In thy curls the clustering grape,—
Or a vanquished slave :
'Tis thy coming that I crave,
And thy folding serpent twine,
Close and dumb ;
Ne'er from that would I escape ;
Come to me in any shape !
Only come !

Only come, and in my breast
Hide thy shame or show thy pride ;
In my bosom be caressed,
Never more to part ;
Come into my yearning heart ;
I, the serpent, golden-eyed,
Twine round thee ;
Twine thee with no venomed test ;
Absence makes the venomed nest ;
Come to me !

Come to me, my lover, come !
Violets on the tender stem
Die and wither in their bloom,
Under dewy grass ;
Come, my lover, or, alas !
I shall die, shall die like them,
Frail and lone ;
Come to me, my lover, come !
Let thy bosom be my tomb :
Come, my own !

THE SHIPWRECK OF IDOMENEUS

Swept from his fleet upon that fatal night
When great Poseidon's sudden-veering wrath
Scattered the happy homeward-floating Greeks
Like foam-flakes off the waves, the King of Crete
Held lofty commune with the dark Sea-god.
His brows were crowned with victory, his cheeks
Were flushed with triumph, but the mighty joy
Of Troy's destruction and his own great deeds
Passed, for the thoughts of home were dearer now,
And sweet the memory of wife and child,
And weary now the ten long, foreign years,
And terrible the doubt of short delay—
More terrible, O Gods! he cried, but stopped;
Then raised his voice upon the storm and prayed.
O thou, if injured, injured not by me,
Poseidon! whom sea-deities obey
And mortals worship, hear me! for indeed
It was our oath to aid the cause of Greece,
Not unespoused by Gods, and most of all
By thee, if gentle currents, havens calm,
Fair winds and prosperous voyage, and the Shape
Impersonate in many a perilous hour,
Both in the stately councils of the Kings,
And when the husky battle murmured thick,
May testify of services performed!
But now the seas are haggard with thy wrath,
Thy breath is tempest! never at the shores

Of hostile Ilium did thy stormful brows
Betray such fierce magnificence ! not even
On that wild day when, mad with torch and glare,
The frantic crowds with eyes like starving wolves
Burst from their ports impregnable, a stream
Of headlong fury toward the hissing deep ;
Where then full-armed I stood in guard, compact
Beside thee, and alone, with brand and spear,
We held at bay the swarming brood, and poured
Blood of choice warriors on the foot-ploughed sands !
Thou, meantime, dark with conflict, as a cloud
That thickens in the bosom of the West
Over quenched sunset, circled round with flame,
Huge as a billow running from the winds
Long distances, till with black shipwreck swoln,
It flings its angry mane about the sky.
And like that billow heaving ere it burst ;
And like that cloud urged by impulsive storm
With charge of thunder, lightning, and the drench
Of torrents, thou in all thy majesty
Of mightiness didst fall upon the war !
Remember that great moment ! Nor forget
The aid I gave thee ; how my ready spear
Flew swiftly seconding thy mortal stroke,
Where'er the press was hottest ; never slacked
My arm its duty, nor mine eye its aim,
Though terribly they compassed us, and stood
Thick as an Autumn forest, whose brown hair,
Lustrous with sunlight, by the still increase
Of heat to glowing heat conceives like zeal
Of radiance, till at the pitch of noon
'Tis seized with conflagration and distends
Horridly over leagues of doom'd domain ;
Mingling the screams of birds, the cries of brutes,
The wail of creatures in the covert pent,

Howls, yells, and shrieks of agony, the hiss
Of seething sap, and crash of falling boughs
Together in its dull voracious roar.
So closely and so fearfully they throng'd,
Savage with phantasies of victory,
A sea of dusky shapes ; for day had passed
And night fell on their darkened faces, red
With fight and torchflare ; shrill the resonant air
With eager shouts, and hoarse with angry groans ;
While over all the dense and sullen boom,
The din and murmur of the myriads,
Rolled with its awful intervals, as though
The battle breathed, or as against the shore
Waves gather back to heave themselves anew.
That night sleep dropped not from the dreary skies,
Nor could the prowess of our chiefs oppose
That sea of raging men. But what were they ?
Or what is man opposed to thee ? His hopes
Are wrecks, himself the drowning, drifting weed
That wanders on thy waters ; such as I
Who see the scattered remnants of my fleet,
Remembering the day when first we sailed,
Each glad ship shining like the morning star
With promise for the world. Oh ! such as I
Thus darkly drifting on the drowning waves.
O God of waters ! 'tis a dreadful thing
To suffer for an evil unrevealed ;
Dreadful it is to hear the perishing cry
Of those we love ; the silence that succeeds
How dreadful ! Still my trust is fixed on thee
For those that still remain and for myself.
And if I hear thy swift foam-snorting steeds
Drawing thy dusky chariot, as in
The pauses of the wind I seem to hear,
Deaf thou art not to my entreating prayer !

Haste then to give us help, for closely now
Crete whispers in my ears, and all my blood
Runs keen and warm for home, and I have yearning,
Such yearning as I never felt before,
To see again my wife, my little son,
My Queen, my pretty nursling of five years,
The darling of my hopes, our dearest pledge
Of marriage, and our brightest prize of love,
Whose parting cry rings clearest in my heart.
O lay this horror, much-offended God!
And making all as fair and firm as when
We trusted to thy mighty depths of old,—
I vow to sacrifice the first whom Zeus
Shall prompt to hail us from the white seashore
And welcome our return to royal Crete,
An offering, Poseidon, unto thee!

Amid the din of elemental strife,
No voice may pierce but Deity supreme:
And Deity supreme alone can hear,
Above the hurricane's discordant shrieks,
The cry of agonized humanity.

Not unappeased was He who smites the waves,
When to his stormy ears the warrior's vow
Entered, and from his foamy pinnacle
Tumultuous he beheld the prostrate form,
And knew the mighty heart. Awhile he gazed,
As doubtful of his purpose, and the storm,
Conscious of that divine debate, withheld
Its fierce emotion, in the luminous gloom
Of those so dark irradiating eyes!
Beneath whose wavering lustre shone revealed
The tumult of the purpling deeps, and all
The throbbing of the tempest, as it paused,

Slowly subsiding, seeming to await
The sudden signal, as a faithful hound
Pants with the forepaws stretched before its nose,
Athwart the greensward, after an eager chase ;
Its hot tongue thrust to cool, its foamy jaws
Open to let the swift breath come and go,
Its quick interrogating eyes fixed keen
Upon the huntsman's countenance, and ever
Lashing its sharp impatient tail with haste :
Prompt at the slightest sign to scour away,
And hang itself afresh by the bleeding fangs,
Upon the neck of some death-singled stag,
Whose royal antlers, eyes, and stumbling knees
Will supplicate the Gods in mute despair.
This time not mute, nor yet in vain this time !
For still the burden of the earnest voice
And all the vivid glories it revoked
Sank in the God, with that absorbed suspense
Felt only by the Olympians, whose minds
Unbounded like our mortal brain, perceive
All things complete, the end, the aim of all ;
To whom the crown and consequence of deeds
Are ever present with the deed itself.

And now the pouring surges, vast and smooth,
Grew weary of restraint, and heaved themselves
Headlong beneath him, breaking at his feet
With wild importunate cries and angry wail ;
Like crowds that shout for bread and hunger more.
And now the surface of their rolling backs
Was ridged with foam-topt furrows, rising high
And dashing wildly, like to fiery steeds,
Fresh from the Thracian or Thessalian plains,
High-blooded mares just tempering to the bit,
Whose manes at full-speed stream upon the winds,

And in whose delicate nostrils when the gust
Breathes of their native plains, they ramp and rear,
Frothing the curb, and bounding from the earth,
As though the Sun-god's chariot alone
Were fit to follow in their flashing track.
Anon with gathering stature to the height
Of those colossal giants, doomed long since
To torturous grief and penance, that assailed
The sky-throned courts of Zeus, and climbing, dared
For once in a world the Olympic wrath, and braved
The electric spirit which from his clenching hand
Pierces the dark-veined earth, and with a touch
Is death to mortals, fearfully they grew!
And with like purpose of audacity
Threatened Titanic fury to the God.
Such was the agitation of the sea
Beneath Poseidon's thought-revolving brows,
Storming for signal. But no signal came.
And as when men, who congregate to hear
Some proclamation from the regal fount,
With eager questioning and anxious phrase
Betray the expectation of their hearts,
Till after many hours of fretful sloth,
Weary with much delay, they hold discourse
In sullen groups and cloudy masses, stirred
With rage irresolute and whispering plot,
Known more by indication than by word,
And understood alone by those whose minds
Participate;—even so the restless waves
Began to lose all sense of servitude,
And worked with rebel passions, bursting, now
To right, and now to left, but evermore
Subdued with influence, and controlled with dread
Of that inviolate Authority.

Then, swiftly as he mused, the impetuous God
Seized on the pausing reins, his coursers plunged,
His brows resumed the grandeur of their ire ;
Throughout his vast divinity the deeps
Concurrent thrilled with action, and away,
As sweeps a thunder-cloud across the sky
In harvest-time, preluded by dull blasts ;
Or some black-visaged whirlwind, whose wide folds
Rush, wrestling on with all 'twixt heaven and earth,
Darkling he hurried, and his distant voice,
Not softened by delay, was heard in tones
Distinctly terrible, still following up
Its rapid utterance of tremendous wrath
With hoarse reverberations ; like the roar
Of lions when they hunger, and awake
The sullen echoes from their forest sleep,
To speed the ravenous noise from hill to hill
And startle victims ; but more awful, He,
Scudding across the hills that rise and sink,
With foam, and splash, and cataracts of spray,
Clothed in majestic splendour ; girt about
With Sea-gods and swift creatures of the sea ;
Their briny eyes blind with the showering drops ;
Their stormy locks, salt tongues, and scaly backs,
Quivering in harmony with the tempest, fierce
And eager with tempestuous delight ;—
He like a moving rock above them all
Solemnly towering while fitful gleams
Brake from his dense black forehead, which display'd
The enduring chiefs as their distracted fleets
Tossed, toiling with the waters, climbing high,
And plunging downward with determined beaks,
In lurid anguish ; but the Cretan king
And all his crew were 'ware of under-tides,
That for the groaning vessel made a path,

On which the impending and precipitous waves
Fell not, nor suck'd to their abysmal gorge.

O, happy they to feel the mighty God,
Without his whelming presence near : to feel
Safety and sweet relief from such despair,
And gushing of their weary hopes once more
Within their fond warm hearts, tired limbs, and eyes
Heavy with much fatigue and want of sleep !
Prayers did not lack ; like mountain springs they came,
After the earth has drunk the drenching rains,
And throws her fresh-born jets into the sun
With joyous sparkles ;—for there needed not
Evidence more serene of instant grace,
Immortal mercy ! and the sense which follows
Divine interposition, when the shock
Of danger hath been thwarted by the Gods,
Visibly, and through supplication deep,—
Rose in them, chiefly in the royal mind
Of him whose interceding vow had saved.
Tears from that great heroic soul sprang up ;
Not painful as in grief, nor smarting keen
With shame of weeping ; but calm, fresh, and sweet ;
Such as in lofty spirits rise, and wed
The nature of the woman to the man ;
A sight most lovely to the Gods ! They fell
Like showers of starlight from his stedfast eyes,
As ever towards the prow he gazed, nor moved
One muscle, with firm lips and level lids,
Motionless ; while the winds sang in his ears,
And took the length of his brown hair in streams
Behind him. Thus the hours passed, and the oars
Plied without pause, and nothing but the sound
Of the dull rowlocks and still watery sough,
Far off, the carnage of the storm, was heard.

For nothing spake the mariners in their toil,
And all the captains of the war were dumb :
Too much oppressed with wonder, too much thrilled
By their great chieftain's silence, to disturb
Such meditation with poor human speech.
Meantime the moon through slips of driving cloud
Came forth, and glanced athwart the seas a path
Of dusky splendour, like the Hadean brows,
When with Elysian passion they behold
Persephone's complacent hueless cheeks.
Soon gathering strength and lustre, as a ship
That swims into some blue and open bay
With bright full-bosomed sails, the radiant car
Of Artemis advanced, and on the waves
Sparkled like arrows from her silver bow
The keenness of her pure and tender gaze.

Then, slowly, one by one the chiefs sought rest ;
The watches being set, and men to relieve
The rowers at midseason. Fair it was
To see them as they lay ! Some up the prow,
Some round the helm, in open-handed sleep ;
With casques unloosed, and bucklers put aside ;
The ten years' tale of war upon their cheeks,
Where clung the salt wet locks, and on their breasts
Beards, the thick growth of many a proud campaign ;
And on their brows the bright invisible crown
Victory sheds from her own radiant form,
As o'er her favourites' heads she sings and soars.
But dreams came not so calmly ; as around
Turbulent shores wild waves and swamping surf
Prevail, while seaward, on the tranquil deeps,
Reign placid surfaces and solemn peace,
So, from the troubled strands of memory, they
Launched and were tossed, long ere they found the tides

That lead to the gentle bosoms of pure rest.
And like to one who from a ghostly watch
In a lone house where murder hath been done,
And secret violations, pale with stealth
Emerges, staggering on the first chill gust
Wherewith the morning greets him, feeling not
Its balmy freshness on his bloodless cheek,—
But swift to hide his midnight face afar,
'Mongst the old woods and timid-glancing flowers
Hastens, till on the fresh reviving breasts
Of tender Dryads folded he forgets
The pallid witness of those nameless things,
In renovated senses lapt, and joins
The full, keen joyance of the day, so they
From sights and sounds of battle smeared with blood,
And shrieking souls on Acheron's bleak tides,
And wail of execrating kindred, slid
Into oblivious slumber and a sense
Of satiate deliciousness complete.

Leave them, O Muse, in that so happy sleep !
Leave them to reap the harvest of their toil,
While fast in moonlight the glad vessel glides,
As if instinctive to its forest home.
O Muse, that in all sorrows and all joys,
Rapturous bliss and suffering divine,
Dwellest with equal fervour, in the calm
Of thy serene philosophy, albeit
Thy gentle nature is of joy alone,
And loves the pipings of the happy fields,
Better than all the great parade and pomp
Which forms the train of heroes and of kings,
And sows, too frequently, the tragic seeds
That choke with sobs thy singing,—turn away
Thy lustrous eyes back to the oath-bound man !

For as a shepherd stands above his flock,
The lofty figure of the king is seen,
Standing above his warriors as they sleep :
And still as from a rock grey waters gush,
While still the rock is passionless and dark,
Nor moves one feature of its giant face,
The tears fall from his eyes, and he stirs not.

And O, bright Muse ! forget not thou to fold
In thy prophetic sympathy the thought
Of him whose destiny has heard its doom :
The Sacrifice thro' whom the ship is saved.
Haply that Sacrifice is sleeping now,
And dreams of glad to-morrows. Haply now,
His hopes are keenest, and his fervent blood
Richest with youth, and love, and fond regard !
Round him the circle of affections blooms,
And in some happy nest of home he lives,
One name oft uttering in delighted ears,
Mother ! at which the heart of men are kin
With reverence and yearning. Haply, too,
That other name, twin holy, twin revered,
He whispers often to the passing winds
That blow toward the Asiatic coasts ;
For Crete has sent her bravest to the war,
And multitudes pressed forward to that rank,
Men with sad weeping wives and little ones.
That other name—O Father ! who art thou,
Thus doomed to lose the star of thy last days ?
It may be the sole flower of thy life,
And that of all who now look up to thee !
O Father, Father ! unto thee even now
Fate cries ; the future with imploring voice
Cries ' Save me,' ' Save me,' though thou hearest not.
And O thou Sacrifice, foredoomed by Zeus ;

Even now the dark inexorable deed
Is dealing its relentless stroke, and vain
Are prayers, and tears, and struggles, and despair !
The mother's tears, the nation's stormful grief,
The people's indignation and revenge !
Vain the last childlike pleading voice for life,
The quick resolve, the young heroic brow,
So like, so like, and vainly beautiful !
Oh ! whosoe'er ye are the Muse says not,
And sees not, but the Gods look down on both.

THE LONGEST DAY

On yonder hills soft twilight dwells
And Hesper burns where sunset dies,
Moist and chill the woodland smells
From the fern-covered hollows uprise ;
Darkness drops not from the skies,
But shadows of darkness are flung o'er the vale
From the boughs of the chestnut, the oak, and the elm,
While night in yon lines of eastern pines
Preserves alone her inviolate realm
Against the twilight pale.

Say, then say, what is this day,
That it lingers thus with half-closed eyes,
When the sunset is quenched and the orient ray
Of the roseate moon doth rise,
Like a midnight sun o'er the skies !
'Tis the longest, the longest of all the glad year,
The longest in life and the fairest in hue,
When day and night, in bridal light,
Mingle their beings beneath the sweet blue,
And bless the balmy air !

Upward to this starry height
The culminating seasons rolled ;
On one slope green with spring delight,
The other with harvest gold,
And treasures of Autumn untold :

And on this highest throne of the midsummer now
The waning but deathless day doth dream,
With a rapturous grace, as tho' from the face
Of the unveiled infinity, lo, a far beam
Had fall'n on her dim-flushed brow !

Prolong, prolong that tide of song,
O leafy nightingale and thrush !
Still, earnest-throated blackcap, throng
The woods with that emulous gush
Of notes in tumultuous rush.
Ye summer souls, raise up one voice !
A charm is afloat all over the land ;
The ripe year doth fall to the Spirit of all,
Who blesses it with outstretched hand ;
Ye summer souls, rejoice !

TO ROBIN REDBREAST

Merrily 'mid the faded leaves,
O Robin of the bright red breast !
Cheerily over the Autumn eaves,
Thy note is heard, bonny bird ;
Sent to cheer us, and kindly endear us
To what would be a sorrowful time
Without thee in the weltering clime :
Merry art thou in the boughs of the lime,
While thy fadeless waistcoat glows on thy breast,
In Autumn's reddest livery drest.

A merry song, a cheery song !
In the boughs above, on the sward below,
Chirping and singing the live day long,
While the maple in grief sheds its fiery leaf,
And all the trees waning, with bitter complaining,
Chestnut, and elm, and sycamore,
Catch the wild gust in their arms, and roar
Like the sea on a stormy shore,
Till wailfully they let it go,
And weep themselves naked and weary with woe.

Merrily, cheerily, joyously still
Pours out the crimson-crested tide.
The set of the season burns bright on the hill,
Where the foliage dead falls yellow and red,
Picturing vainly, but foretelling plainly
The wealth of cottage warmth that comes
When the frost gleams and the blood numbs,
And then, bonny Robin, I 'll spread thee out crumbs
In my garden porch for thy redbreast pride,
The song and the ensign of dear fireside.

SONG

The daisy now is out upon the green ;
And in the grassy lanes
The child of April rains,
The sweet fresh-hearted violet, is smelt and loved unseen.

Along the brooks and meads, the daffodil
Its yellow richness spreads,
And by the fountain-heads
Of rivers, cowslips cluster round, and over every hill.

The crocus and the primrose may have gone,
The snowdrop may be low,
But soon the purple glow
Of hyacinths will fill the copse, and lilies watch the dawn.

And in the sweetness of the budding year,
The cuckoo's woodland call,
The skylark over all,
And then at eve, the nightingale, is doubly sweet and dear.

My soul is singing with the happy birds,
And all my human powers
Are blooming with the flowers,
My foot is on the fields and downs, among the flocks and herds.

Deep in the forest where the foliage droops,
I wander, fill'd with joy.
Again as when a boy,
The sunny vistas tempt me on with dim delicious hopes.

The sunny vistas, dim with hurrying shade,
And old romantic haze :—
Again as in past days,
The spirit of immortal Spring doth every sense pervade.

Oh ! do not say that this will ever cease ;—
This joy of woods and fields,
This youth that nature yields,
Will never speak to me in vain, tho' soundly rapt in peace.

SUNRISE

The clouds are withdrawn
And their thin-rippled mist,
That stream'd o'er the lawn
To the drowsy-eyed west.
Cold and grey
They slept in the way,
And shrank from the ray
Of the chariot East :
But now they are gone,
And the bounding light
Leaps thro' the bars
Of doubtful dawn ;
Blinding the stars,
And blessing the sight ;
Shedding delight
On all below ;
Glimmering fields,
And wakening wealds,
And rising lark,
And meadows dark,
And idle rills,
And labouring mills,
And far-distant hills
Of the fawn and the doe.
The sun is cheered
And his path is cleared,
As he steps to the air
From his emerald cave,
His heel in the wave,

Most bright and bare ;
In the tide of the sky
His radiant hair
From his temples fair
Blown back on high ;
As forward he bends,
And upward ascends,
Timely and true,
To the breast of the blue ;
His warm red lips
Kissing the dew,
Which sweetened drips
On his flower cupholders ;
Every hue
From his gleaming shoulders
Shining anew
With colour sky-born,
As it washes and dips
In the pride of the morn.
Robes of azure,
Fringed with amber,
Fold upon fold
Of purple and gold,
Vine-leaf bloom,
And the grape's ripe gloom,
When season deep
In noontide leisure,
With clustering heap
The tendrils clamber
Full in the face
Of his hot embrace,
Fill'd with the gleams
Of his firmest beams.
Autumn flushes,
Roseate blushes,

Vermeil tinges,
Violet fringes,
Every hue
Of his flower cupholders,
O'er the clear ether
Mingled together,
Shining anew
From his gleaming shoulders !
Circling about
In a coronal rout,
And floating behind,
The way of the wind,
As forward he bends,
And upward ascends,
Timely and true,
To the breast of the blue.
His bright neck curved,
His clear limbs nerved,
Diamond keen
On his front serene,
While each white arm strains
To the racing reins,
As plunging, eyes flashing,
Dripping, and dashing,
His steeds triple grown
Rear up to his throne,
Ruffling the rest
Of the sea's blue breast,
From his flooding, flaming crimson crest !

PICTURES OF THE RHINE

I

THE spirit of Romance dies not to those
Who hold a kindred spirit in their souls :
Even as the odorous life within the rose
Lives in the scattered leaflets and controls
Mysterious adoration, so there glows
Above dead things a thing that cannot die ;
Faint as the glimmer of a tearful eye,
Ere the orb fills and all the sorrow flows.
Beauty renews itself in many ways ;
The flower is fading while the new bud blows ;
And this dear land as true a symbol shows,
While o'er it like a mellow sunset strays
The legendary splendour of old days,
In visible, inviolate repose.

II

About a mile behind the viny banks,
How sweet it was, upon a sloping green,
Sunspread, and shaded with a branching screen,
To lie in peace half-murmuring words of thanks !
To see the mountains on each other climb,
With spaces for rich meadows flowery bright ;
The winding river freshening the sight
At intervals, the trees in leafy prime ;
The distant village-roofs of blue and white,
With intersections of quaint-fashioned beams
All slanting crosswise, and the feudal gleams
Of ruined turrets, barren in the light ;—
To watch the changing clouds, like clime in clime ;
Oh ! sweet to lie and bless the luxury of time.

III

Fresh blows the early breeze, our sail is full ;
A merry morning and a mighty tide.
Cheerily O ! and past St. Goar we glide,
Half hid in misty dawn and mountain cool.
The river is our own ! and now the sun
In saffron clothes the warming atmosphere ;
The sky lifts up her white veil like a nun,
And looks upon the landscape blue and clear ;—
The lark is up ; the hills, the vines in sight ;
The river broadens with his waking bliss
And throws up islands to behold the light ;
Voices begin to rise, all hues to kiss ;—
Was ever such a happy morn as this !
Birds sing, we shout, flowers breathe, trees shine with one delight !

IV

Between the two white breasts of her we love,
A dewy blushing rose will sometimes spring ;
Thus Nonnenwerth like an enchanted thing
Rises mid-stream the crystal depths above.
On either side the waters heave and swell,
But all is calm within the little Isle ;
Content it is to give its holy smile,
And bless with peace the lives that in it dwell.
Most dear on the dark grass beneath its bower
Of kindred trees embracing branch and bough,
To dream of fairy foot and sudden flower ;
Or haply with a twilight on the brow,
To muse upon the legendary hour,
And Roland's lonely love and Hildegard's sad vow.

V

Hark ! how the bitter winter breezes blow
Round the sharp rocks and o'er the half-lifted wave,
While all the rocky woodland branches rave
Shrill with the piercing cold, and every cave,
Along the icy water-margin low,
Rings bubbling with the whirling overflow ;
And sharp the echoes answer distant cries
Of dawning daylight and the dim sunrise,
And the gloom-coloured clouds that stain the skies
With pictures of a warmth, and frozen glow
Spread over endless fields of sheeted snow ;
And white untrodden mountains shining cold,
And muffled footpaths winding thro' the wold,
O'er which those wintry gusts cease not to howl and blow.

VI

Rare is the loveliness of slow decay !
With youth and beauty all must be desired,
But 'tis the charm of things long past away,
They leave, alone, the light they have inspired :
The calmness of a picture ; Memory now
Is the sole life among the ruins grey,
And like a phantom in fantastic play
She wanders with rank weeds stuck on her brow,
Over grass-hidden caves and turret-tops,
Herself almost as tottering as they ;
While, to the steps of Time, her latest props
Fall stone by stone, and in the Sun's hot ray
All that remains stands up in rugged pride,
And bridal vines drink in his juices on each side.

TO A NIGHTINGALE

O NIGHTINGALE ! how hast thou learnt
The note of the nested dove ?
While under thy bower the fern hangs burnt
And no cloud hovers above !
Rich July has many a sky
With splendour dim, that thou mightst hymn,
And make rejoice with thy wondrous voice,
And the thrill of thy wild pervading tone !
But instead of to woo, thou hast learnt to coo :
Thy song is mute at the mellowing fruit,
And the dirge of the flowers is sung by the hours
In silence and twilight alone.

O nightingale ! 'tis this, 'tis this
That makes thee mock the dove !
That thou hast past thy marriage bliss,
To know a parent's love.
The waves of fern may fade and burn,
The grasses may fall, the flowers and all,
And the pine-smells o'er the oak dells
Float on their drowsy and odorous wings,
But thou wilt do nothing but coo,
Brimming the nest with thy brooding breast,
'Midst that young throng of future song,
Round whom the Future sings !

INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY

Now 'tis Spring on wood and wold,
Early Spring that shivers with cold,
But gladdens, and gathers, day by day,
A lovelier hue, a warmer ray,
A sweeter song, a dearer ditty ;
Ouzel and throstle, new-mated and gay,
Singing their bridals on every spray—
Oh, hear them, deep in the songless City !
Cast off the yoke of toil and smoke,
As Spring is casting winter's grey,
As serpents cast their skins away :
And come, for the Country awaits thee with pity
And longs to bathe thee in her delight,
And take a new joy in thy kindling sight ;
And I no less, by day and night,
Long for thy coming, and watch for, and wait thee,
And wonder what duties can thus belate thee.

Dry-fruited firs are dropping their cones,
And vista'd avenues of pines
Take richer green, give fresher tones,
As morn after morn the glad sun shines.

Primrose tufts peep over the brooks,
Fair faces amid moist decay !
The rivulets run with the dead leaves at play,
The leafless elms are alive with the rooks.

Over the meadows the cowslips are springing,
The marshes are thick with king-cup gold,
Clear is the cry of the lambs in the fold,
The skylark is singing, and singing, and singing.

Soon comes the cuckoo when April is fair,
And her blue eye the brighter the more it may weep :
The frog and the butterfly wake from their sleep,
Each to its element, water and air.

Mist hangs still on every hill,
And curls up the valleys at eve ; but noon
Is fullest of Spring ; and at midnight the moon
Gives her westering throne to Orion's bright zone,
As he slopes o'er the darkened world's repose ;
And a lustre in eastern Sirius glows.

Come, in the season of opening buds ;
Come, and molest not the otter that whistles
Unlit by the moon, 'mid the wet winter bristles
Of willow, half-drowned in the fattening floods.
Let him catch his cold fish without fear of a gun,
And the stars shall shield him, and thou wilt shun !
And every little bird under the sun
Shall know that the bounty of Spring doth dwell
In the winds that blow, in the waters that run,
And in the breast of man as well.

THE SWEET O' THE YEAR

Now the frog, all lean and weak,
Yawning from his famished sleep,
Water in the ditch doth seek,
Fast as he can stretch and leap :
Marshy king-cups burning near
Tell him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the ant works up his mound
In the mouldered piny soil,
And above the busy ground
Takes the joy of earnest toil :
Dropping pine-cones, dry and sere,
Warn him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the chrysalis on the wall
Cracks, and out the creature springs,
Raptures in his body small,
Wonders on his dusty wings :
Bells and cups, all shining clear,
Show him 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the brown bee, wild and wise,
Hums abroad, and roves and roams,
Storing in his wealthy thighs
Treasure for the golden combs :
Dewy buds and blossoms dear
Whisper 'tis the sweet o' the year.

Now the merry maids so fair
Weave the wreaths and choose the queen,
Blooming in the open air,
Like fresh flowers upon the green ;
Spring, in every thought sincere,
Thrills them with the sweet o' the year.

Now the lads, all quick and gay,
Whistle to the browsing herds,
Or in the twilight pastures grey
Learn the use of whispered words :
First a blush, and then a tear,
And then a smile, i' the sweet o' the year.

Now the May-fly and the fish
Play again from noon to night ;
Every breeze begets a wish,
Every motion means delight :
Heaven high over heath and mere
Crowns with blue the sweet o' the year.

Now all Nature is alive,
Bird and beetle, man and mole ;
Bee-like goes the human hive,
Lark-like sings the soaring soul :
Hearty faith and honest cheer
Welcome in the sweet o' the year.

AUTUMN EVEN-SONG

The long cloud edged with streaming grey
Soars from the West ;
The red leaf mounts with it away,
Showing the nest
A blot among the branches bare :
There is a cry of outcasts in the air.

Swift little breezes, darting chill,
Pant down the lake ;
A crow flies from the yellow hill,
And in its wake
A baffled line of labouring rooks :
Steel-surfaced to the light the river looks.

Pale on the panes of the old hall
Gleams the lone space
Between the sunset and the squall ;
And on its face
Mournfully glimmers to the last :
Great oaks grow mighty minstrels in the blast.

Pale the rain-rutted roadways shine
In the green light
Behind the cedar and the pine :
Come, thundering night !
Blacken broad earth with hoards of storm :
For me yon valley-cottage beckons warm.

THE SONG OF COURTESY

I

When Sir Gawain was led to his bridal-bed,
By Arthur's knights in scorn God-sped :—
How think you he felt ?
O the bride within
Was yellow and dry as a snake's old skin ;
Loathly as sin !
Scarcely faceable,
Quite unembraceable ;
With a hog's bristle on a hag's chin !—
Gentle Gawain felt as should we,
Little of Love's soft fire knew he :
But he was the Knight of Courtesy.

II

When that evil lady he lay beside
Bade him turn to greet his bride,
What think you he did ?
O, to spare her pain,
And let not his loathing her loathliness vain
Mirror too plain,
Sadly, sighingly,
Almost dyingly,
Turned he and kissed her once and again.
Like Sir Gawain, gentles, should we ?
Silent, all ! But for pattern agree
There 's none like the Knight of Courtesy.

III

Sir Gawain sprang up amid laces and curls :
Kisses are not wasted pearls :—
What clung in his arms ?
O, a maiden flower,
Burning with blushes the sweet bride-bower,
Beauty her dower !
Breathing perfumingly ;
Shall I live bloomingly,
Said she, by day, or the bridal hour ?
Thereat he clasped her, and whispered he,
Thine, rare bride, the choice shall be.
Said she, Twice blest is Courtesy !

IV

Of gentle Sir Gawain they had no sport,
When it was morning in Arthur's court ;
What think you they cried ?
Now, life and eyes !
This bride is the very Saint's dream of a prize,
Fresh from the skies !
See ye not, Courtesy
Is the true Alchemy,
Turning to gold all it touches and tries ?
Like the true knight, so may we
Make the basest that there be
Beautiful by Courtesy !

THE THREE MAIDENS

THERE were three maidens met on the highway ;
The sun was down, the night was late :
And two sang loud with the birds of May,
O the nightingale is merry with its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Why walk you there so still ?
The land is dark, the night is late :
O, but the heart in my side is ill,
And the nightingale will languish for its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Of lovers there is store ;
The moon mounts up, the night is late :
O, I shall look on man no more,
And the nightingale is dumb without its mate.

Said they to the youngest, Uncross your arms and sing ;
The moon mounts high, the night is late :
O my dear lover can hear no thing,
And the nightingale sings only to its mate.

They slew him in revenge, and his true-love was his lure ;
The moon is pale, the night is late :
His grave is shallow on the moor ;
O the nightingale is dying for its mate.

His blood is on his breast, and the moss-roots at his hair ;
The moon is chill, the night is late :
But I will lie beside him there :
O the nightingale is dying for its mate.

OVER THE HILLS

The old hound wags his shaggy tail,
And I know what he would say :
It 's over the hills we 'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills, and away.

There 's nought for us here save to count the clock,
And hang the head all day :
But over the hills we 'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

Here among men we 're like the deer
That yonder is our prey :
So, over the hills we 'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The hypocrite is master here,
But he 's the cock of clay :
So, over the hills we 'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The women, they shall sigh and smile,
And madden whom they may :
It 's over the hills we 'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

Let silly lads in couples run
To pleasure, a wicked fay :
'Tis ours on the heather to bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The torrent glints under the rowan red,
And shakes the bracken spray :
What joy on the heather to bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The sun bursts broad, and the heathery bed
Is purple, and orange, and gray :
Away, and away, we 'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

JUGGLING JERRY

I

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes :
  By the old hedge-side we 'll halt a stage.
It 's nigh my last above the daisies :
  My next leaf 'll be man's blank page.
Yes, my old girl ! and it 's no use crying :
  Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
One that outjuggles all 's been spying
  Long to have me, and he has me now.

II

We 've travelled times to this old common :
  Often we 've hung our pots in the gorse.
We 've had a stirring life, old woman !
  You, and I, and the old grey horse.
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
  Found us coming to their call :
Now they 'll miss us at our stations :
  There 's a Juggler outjuggles all !

III

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly !
  Over the duck-pond the willow shakes.
Easy to think that grieving 's folly,
  When the hand 's firm as driven stakes !

Ay, when we 're strong, and braced, and manful,
  Life 's a sweet fiddle : but we 're a batch
Born to become the Great Juggler's han'ful :
  Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

IV

Here 's where the lads of the village cricket :
  I was a lad not wide from here :
Couldn't I whip off the bail from the wicket ?
  Like an old world those days appear !
Donkey, sheep, geese, and thatched ale-house—I know them !
  They are old friends of my halts, and seem,
Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them :
  Juggling don't hinder the heart's esteem.

V

Juggling 's no sin, for we must have victual :
  Nature allows us to bait for the fool.
Holding one's own makes us juggle no little ;
  But, to increase it, hard juggling 's the rule.
You that are sneering at my profession,
  Haven't you juggled a vast amount ?
There 's the Prime Minister, in one Session,
  Juggles more games than my sins 'll count.

VI

I 've murdered insects with mock thunder :
  Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.
I 've made bread from the bump of wonder :
  That 's my business, and there 's my tale.

Fashion and rank all praised the professor :
Ay ! and I 've had my smile from the Queen :
Bravo, Jerry ! she meant : God bless her !
Ain't this a sermon on that scene ?

VII

I 've studied men from my topsy-turvy
Close, and, I reckon, rather true.
Some are fine fellows : some, right scurvy :
Most, a dash between the two.
But it 's a woman, old girl, that makes me
Think more kindly of the race :
And it 's a woman, old girl, that shakes me
When the Great Juggler I must face.

VIII

We two were married, due and legal :
Honest we 've lived since we 've been one.
Lord ! I could then jump like an eagle :
You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.
Birds in a May-bush we were ! right merry !
All night we kiss'd, we juggled all day.
Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry !
Now from his old girl he 's juggled away.

IX

It 's past parsons to console us :
No, nor no doctor fetch for me :
I can die without my bolus ;
Two of a trade, lass, never agree !

Parson and Doctor !—don't they love rarely
  Fighting the devil in other men's fields !
Stand up yourself and match him fairly :
  Then see how the rascal yields !

X

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting
  Finery while his poor helpmate grubs :
Coin I 've stored, and you won't be wanting :
  You sha'n't beg from the troughs and tubs.
Nobly you 've stuck to me, though in his kitchen
  Many a Marquis would hail you Cook !
Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,
  But your old Jerry you never forsook.

XI

Hand up the chirper ! ripe ale winks in it ;
  Let 's have comfort and be at peace.
Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.
  Cheer up ! the Lord must have his lease.
May be—for none see in that black hollow—
  It 's just a place where we 're held in pawn,
And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,
  It 's just the sword-trick—I ain't quite gone !

XII

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
  Gold-like and warm : it 's the prime of May.
Better than mortar, brick and putty,
  Is God's house on a blowing day.

Lean me more up the mound ; now I feel it :
All the old heath-smells ! Ain't it strange ?
There 's the world laughing, as if to conceal it,
But He 's by us, juggling the change.

XIII

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,
Once—it 's long gone—when two gulls we beheld,
Which, as the moon got up, were flying
Down a big wave that sparked and swelled.
Crack, went a gun : one fell : the second
Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new luck :
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd :—
Drop me a kiss—I 'm the bird dead-struck !

THE CROWN OF LOVE

O MIGHT I load my arms with thee,
Like that young lover of Romance
Who loved and gained so gloriously
The fair Princess of France !

Because he dared to love so high,
He, bearing her dear weight, shall speed
To where the mountain touched on sky :
So the proud king decreed.

Unhalting he must bear her on,
Nor pause a space to gather breath,
And on the height she will be won ;—
And she was won in death !

Red the far summit flames with morn,
While in the plain a glistening Court
Surrounds the king who practised scorn
Through such a mask of sport.

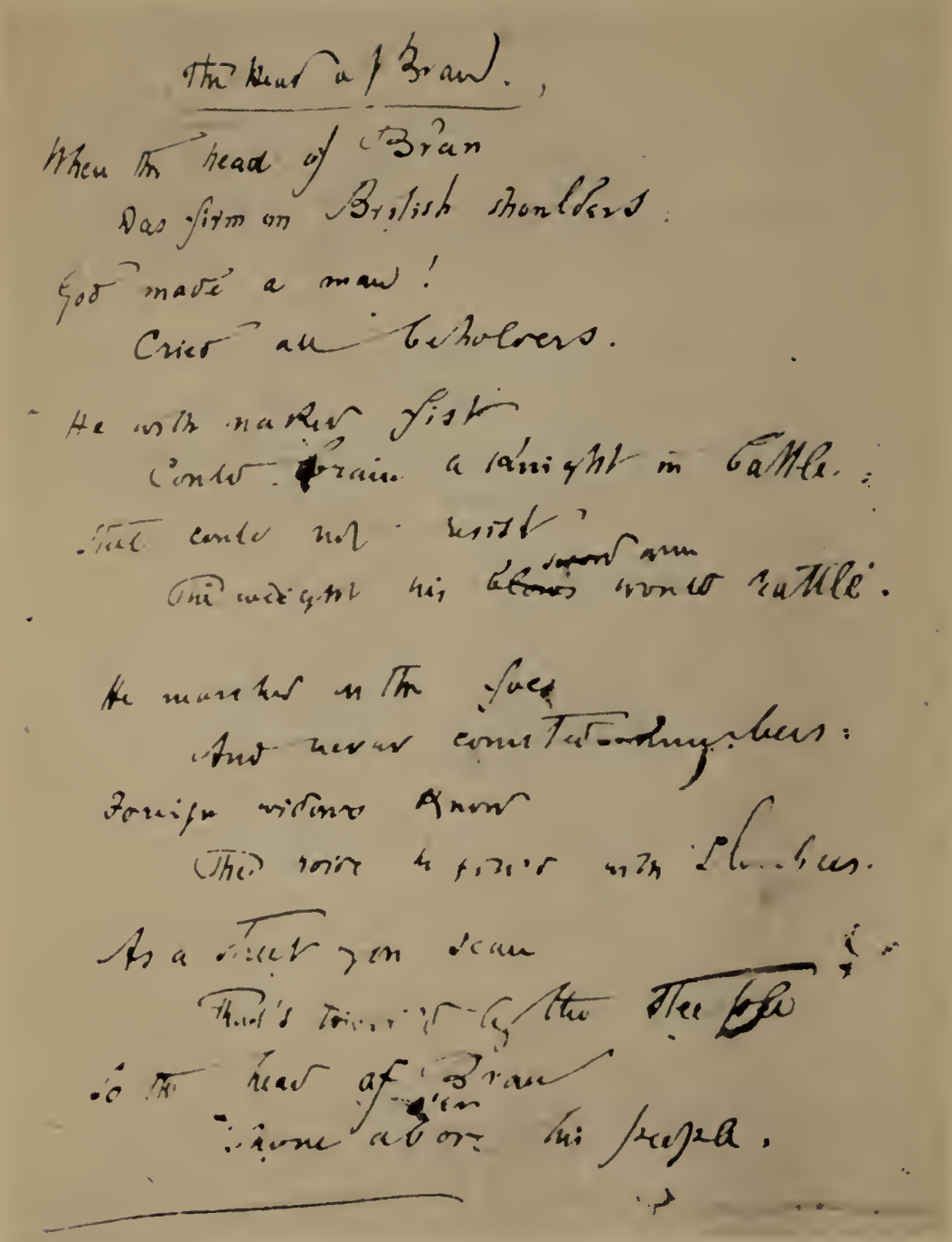
She leans into his arms ; she lets
Her lovely shape be clasped : he fares.
God speed him whole ! The knights make bets :
The ladies lift soft prayers.

O have you seen the deer at chase ?
O have you seen the wounded kite ?
So boundingly he runs the race,
So wavering grows his flight.

—My lover ! linger here, and slake
Thy thirst, or me thou wilt not win.
—See'st thou the tumbled heavens ? they break !
They beckon us up and in.

—Ah, hero-love ! unloose thy hold :
O drop me like a curséd thing.
—See'st thou the crowded swards of gold ?
They wave to us Rose and Ring.

—O death-white mouth ! O cast me down !
Thou diest ? Then with thee I die.
—See'st thou the angels with their Crown ?
We twain have reached the sky.



The Head of Bran.

When the head of Bran
Das firm on British shoulders:
God made a man!
Cried all beholders.

He with naked fist
Could brain a knight in battle:
That could not resist
The weight his ~~blows~~ sword arm would rattle.

He marched on the foes
And never counted numbers:
Foreign widows know
The noise he fired with slumbers.

As a street you scan
That's towered by the steeple
So the head of Bran
Shone above his people.

"The Head of Bran."
Fragment from an early note book.

THE HEAD OF BRAN THE BLEST

I

When the Head of Bran
Was firm on British shoulders,
God made a man!
Cried all beholders.

Steel could not resist
The weight his arm would rattle;
He, with naked fist,
Has brain'd a knight in battle.

He marched on the foe,
And never counted numbers;
Foreign widows know
The hosts he sent to slumbers.

As a street you scan,
That 's towered by the steeple,
So the Head of Bran
Rose o'er his people.

II

'Death 's my neighbour,'
Quoth Bran the Blest;
'Christian labour
Brings Christian rest.
From the trunk sever
The Head of Bran,
That which never
Has bent to man!

'That which never
To men has bowed
Shall live ever
To shame the shroud :
Shall live ever
To face the foe ;
Sever it, sever,
And with one blow.

'Be it written,
That all I wrought
Was for Britain,
In deed and thought :
Be it written,
That while I die,
Glory to Britain !
Is my last cry.

'Glory to Britain !
Death echoes me round.
Glory to Britain !
The world shall resound.
Glory to Britain !
In ruin and fall,
Glory to Britain !
Is heard over all.'

III

Burn, Sun, down the sea !
Bran lies low with thee.

Burst, Morn, from the main !
Bran so shall rise again.

Blow, Wind, from the field !
Bran's Head is the Briton's shield.

Beam, Star, in the West !
Bright burns the Head of Bran the Blest.

IV

Crimson-footed, like the stork,
From great ruts of slaughter,
Warriors of the Golden Torque
Cross the lifting water.
Princes seven, enchaining hands,
Bear the live head homeward.
Lo ! it speaks, and still commands :
Gazing out far foamward.

Fiery words of lightning sense
Down the hollows thunder ;
Forest hostels know not whence
Comes the speech, and wonder.
City-Castles, on the steep,
Where the faithful Seven
House at midnight, hear, in sleep,
Laughter under heaven.

Lilies, swimming on the mere,
In the castle shadow,
Under draw their heads, and Fear
Walks the misty meadow.
Tremble not ! it is not Death
Pledging dark espousal :
'Tis the Head of endless breath,
Challenging carousal !

Brim the horn ! a health is drunk,
Now, that shall keep going :
Life is but the pebble sunk ;
Deeds, the circle growing !
Fill, and pledge the Head of Bran !
While his lead they follow,
Long shall heads in Britain plan
Speech Death cannot swallow !

The Meeting.

THE MEETING

The old coach-road through a common of furze,
With knolls of pine, ran white ;
Berries of autumn, with thistles, and burrs,
And spider-threads, droop'd in the light.

The light in a thin blue veil peered sick ;
The sheep grazed close and still ;
The smoke of a farm by a yellow rick
Curled lazily under a hill.

No fly shook the round of the silver net ;
No insect the swift bird chased ;
Only two travellers moved and met
Across that hazy waste.

One was a girl with a babe that throve,
Her ruin and her bliss ;
One was a youth with a lawless love,
Who clasped it the more for this.

The girl for her babe hummed prayerful speech ;
The youth for his love did pray ;
Each cast a wistful look on each,
And either went their way.

THE BEGGAR'S SOLILOQUY

I

Now, this, to my notion, is pleasant cheer,
To lie all alone on a ragged heath,
Where your nose isn't sniffing for bones or beer,
But a peat-fire smells like a garden beneath.
The cottagers bustle about the door,
And the girl at the window ties her strings.
She 's a dish for a man who 's a mind to be poor ;
Lord ! women are such expensive things.

II

We don't marry beggars, says she : why, no :
It seems that to make 'em is what you do ;
And as I can cook, and scour, and sew,
I needn't pay half my victuals for you.
A man for himself should be able to scratch,
But tickling 's a luxury :—love, indeed !
Love burns as long as the lucifer match,
Wedlock 's the candle ! Now, that 's my creed.

III

The church-bells sound water-like over the wheat ;
And up the long path troop pair after pair.
The man 's well-brushed, and the woman looks neat :
It 's man and woman everywhere !

Unless, like me, you lie here flat,
With a donkey for friend, you must have a wife :
She pulls out your hair, but she brushes your hat.
Appearances make the best half of life.

IV

You nice little madam ! you know you 're nice.
I remember hearing a parson say
You 're a plateful of vanity pepper'd with vice ;
Yon chap at the gate thinks t' other way.
On his waistcoat you read both his head and his heart :
There 's a whole week's wages there figured in gold !
Yes ! when you turn round you may well give a start :
It 's fun to a fellow who 's getting old.

V

Now, that 's a good craft, weaving waistcoats and flowers,
And selling of ribbons, and scenting of lard :
It gives you a house to get in from the showers,
And food when your appetite jockeys you hard.
You live a respectable man ; but I ask
If it 's worth the trouble ? You use your tools,
And spend your time, and what 's your task ?
Why, to make a slide for a couple of fools.

VI

You can't match the colour o' these heath mounds,
Nor better that peat-fire's agreeable smell.
I 'm clothed-like with natural sights and sounds ;
To myself I 'm in tune : I hope you 're as well.
You jolly old cot ! though you don't own coal :
It 's a generous pot that 's boiled with peat.
Let the Lord Mayor o' London roast oxen whole :
His smoke, at least, don't smell so sweet.

VII

I 'm not a low Radical, hating the laws,
Who 'd the aristocracy rebuke.
I talk o' the Lord Mayor o' London because
I once was on intimate terms with his cook.
I served him a turn, and got pensioned on scraps,
And, Lord, Sir ! didn't I envy his place,
Till Death knock'd him down with the softest of taps,
And I knew what was meant by a tallowy face !

VIII

On the contrary, I 'm Conservative quite ;
There 's beggars in Scripture 'mongst Gentiles and Jews :
It 's nonsense, trying to set things right,
For if people will give, why, who 'll refuse ?
That stopping old custom wakes my spleen :
The poor and the rich both in giving agree :
Your tight-fisted shopman 's the Radical mean :
There 's nothing in common 'twixt him and me.

IX

He says I 'm no use ! but I won't reply.
You 're lucky not being of use to him !
On week-days he 's playing at Spider and Fly,
And on Sundays he sings about Cherubim !
Nailing shillings to counters is his chief work :
He nods now and then at the name on his door :
But judge of us two, at a bow and a smirk,
I think I 'm his match : and I 'm honest—that 's more.

X

No use ! well, I mayn't be. You ring a pig's snout,
And then call the animal glutton ! Now, he,

Mr. Shopman, he 's nought but a pipe and a spout
Who won't let the goods o' this world pass free.
This blazing blue weather all round the brown crop,
He can't enjoy ! all but cash he hates.
He 's only a snail that crawls under his shop ;
Though he has got the ear o' the magistrates.

XI

Now, giving and taking 's a proper exchange,
Like question and answer : you 're both content.
But buying and selling seems always strange ;
You 're hostile, and that 's the thing that 's meant.
It 's man against man—you 're almost brutes ;
There 's here no thanks, and there 's there no pride.
If Charity 's Christian, don't blame my pursuits,
I carry a touchstone by which you 're tried.

XII

—' Take it,' says she, ' it 's all I 've got ' :
I remember a girl in London streets :
She stood by a coffee-stall, nice and hot,
My belly was like a lamb that bleats.
Says I to myself, as her shilling I seized,
You haven't a character here, my dear !
But for making a rascal like me so pleased,
I 'll give you one, in a better sphere !

XIII

And that 's where it is—she made me feel
I was a rascal : but people who scorn,
And tell a poor patch-breech he isn't genteel,
Why, they make him kick up—and he treads on a corn.

It isn't liking, it 's curst ill-luck,
Drives half of us into the begging-trade :
If for taking to water you praise a duck,
For taking to beer why a man upbraid ?

XIV

The sermon 's over : they 're out of the porch,
And it 's time for me to move a leg ;
But in general people who come from church,
And have called themselves sinners, hate chaps to beg.
I 'll wager they 'll all of 'em dine to-day !
I was easy half a minute ago.
If that isn't pig that 's baking away,
May I perish !—we 're never contented—heigho !

BY THE ROSANNA

TO F. M.

STANZER THAL, TYROL.

THE old grey Alp has caught the cloud,
And the torrent river sings aloud ;
The glacier-green Rosanna sings
An organ song of its upper springs.
Foaming under the tiers of pine,
I see it dash down the dark ravine,
And it tumbles the rocks in boisterous play,
With an earnest will to find its way.
Sharp it throws out an emerald shoulder,
And, thundering ever of the mountain,
Slaps in sport some giant boulder,
And tops it in a silver fountain.
A chain of foam from end to end,
And a solitude so deep, my friend,
You may forget that man abides
Beyond the great mute mountain-sides.
Yet to me, in this high-walled solitude
Of river and rock and forest rude,
The roaring voice through the long white chain
Is the voice of the world of bubble and brain.

PHANTASY

I

Within a Temple of the Toes,
Where twirled the passionate Wili,
I saw full many a market rose,
And sighed for my village lily.

II

With cynical Adrian then I took flight
To that old dead city whose carol
Bursts out like a reveller's loud in the night,
As he sits astride his barrel.

III

We two were bound the Alps to scale,
Up the rock-reflecting river;
Old times blew thro' me like a gale,
And kept my thoughts in a quiver.

IV

Hawking ruin, wood-slope, and vine
Reeled silver-laced under my vision,
And into me passed, with the green-eyed wine
Knocking hard at my head for admission.

V

I held the village lily cheap,
And the dream around her idle:
Lo, quietly as I lay to sleep,
The bells led me off to a bridal.

VI

My bride wore the hood of a Béguine,
And mine was the foot to falter ;
Three cowled monks, rat-eyed, were seen ;
The Cross was of bones o'er the altar.

VII

The Cross was of bones ; the priest that read,
A spectacled necromancer :
But at the fourth word, the bride I led
Changed to an Opera dancer.

VIII

A young ballet-beauty, who perked in her place,
A darling of pink and spangles ;
One fair foot level with her face,
And the hearts of men at her ankles.

IX

She whirled, she twirled, the mock-priest grinned,
And quickly his mask unriddled ;
'Twas Adrian ! loud his old laughter dinned ;
Then he seized a fiddle, and fiddled.

X

He fiddled, he glowed with the bottomless fire,
Like Sathanas in feature :
All through me he fiddled a wolfish desire
To dance with that bright creature.

XI

And gathering courage I said to my soul,
Throttle the thing that hinders !
When the three cowled monks, from black as coal,
Waxed hot as furnace-cinders.

XII

They caught her up, twirling : they leapt between-whiles :
The fiddler flickered with laughter :
Profanely they flew down the awful aisles,
Where I went sliding after.

XIII

Down the awful aisles, by the fretted walls,
Beneath the Gothic arches :—
King Skull in the black confessionals
Sat rub-a-dub-dubbing his marches.

XIV

Then the silent cold stone warriors frowned,
The pictured saints strode forward :
A whirlwind swept them from holy ground ;
A tempest puffed them nor'ward.

XV

They shot through the great cathedral door ;
Like mallards they traversed ocean :
And gazing below, on its boiling floor,
I marked a horrid commotion.

XVI

Down a forest's long alleys they spun like tops :
It seemed that for ages and ages,
Thro' the Book of Life bereft of stops,
They waltzed continuous pages.

XVII

And ages after, scarce awake,
And my blood with the fever fretting,
I stood alone by a forest-lake,
Whose shadows the moon were netting.

XVIII

Lilies, golden and white, by the curls
Of their broad flat leaves hung swaying.
A wreath of languid twining girls
Streamed upward, long locks disarraying.

XIX

Their cheeks had the satin frost-glow of the moon ;
Their eyes the fire of Sirius.
They circled, and droned a monotonous tune,
Abandoned to love delirious.

XX

Like lengths of convolvulus torn from the hedge,
And trailing the highway over,
The dreamy-eyed mistresses circled the sedge,
And called for a lover, a lover !

XXI

I sank, I rose through seas of eyes,
In odorous swathes delicious :
They fanned me with impetuous sighs,
They bit me with kisses vicious.

XXII

My ears were spelled, my neck was coiled,
And I with their fury was glowing,
When the marbly waters bubbled and boiled
At a watery noise of crowing.

XXIII

They dragged me low and low to the lake :
Their kisses more stormily showered ;
On the emerald brink, in the white moon's wake,
An earthly damsel cowered.

XXIV

Fresh heart-sobs shook her knitted hands
Beneath a tiny suckling,
As one by one of the doleful bands
Dived like a fairy duckling.

XXV

And now my turn had come—O me !
What wisdom was mine that second !
I dropped on the adorer's knee ;
To that sweet figure I beckoned.

XXVI

Save me ! save me ! for now I know
The powers that Nature gave me,
And the value of honest love I know :—
My village lily ! save me !

XXVII

Come 'twixt me and the sisterhood,
While the passion-born phantoms are fleeing !
Oh, he that is true to flesh and blood
Is true to his own being !

XXVIII

And he that is false to flesh and blood
Is false to the star within him :
And the mad and hungry sisterhood
All under the tides shall win him !

XXIX

My village lily ! save me ! save !
For strength is with the holy :—
Already I shuddered to feel the wave,
As I kept sinking slowly :—

XXX

I felt the cold wave and the under-tug
Of the Brides, when—starting and shrinking—
Lo, Adrian tilts the water-jug !
And Bruges with morn is blinking.

XXXI

Merrily sparkles sunny prime
On gabled peak and arbour :
Merrily rattles belfry-chime
The song of Sevilla's Barber.

THE OLD CHARTIST

I

WHATE'ER I be, old England is my dam !
So there 's my answer to the judges, clear
I 'm nothing of a fox, nor of a lamb ;
I don't know how to bleat nor how to leer :
I 'm for the nation !
That 's why you see me by the wayside here,
Returning home from transportation.

II

It 's Summer in her bath this morn, I think.
I 'm fresh as dew, and chirpy as the birds :
And just for joy to see old England wink
Thro' leaves again, I could harangue the herds :
Isn't it something
To speak out like a man when you 've got words,
And prove you 're not a stupid dumb thing ?

III

They shipp'd me off for it ; I 'm here again.
Old England is my dam, whate'er I be !
Says I, I 'll tramp it home, and see the grain :
If you see well, you 're king of what you see :
Eyesight is having,
If you 're not given, I said, to gluttony.
Such talk to ignorance sounds as raving.

IV

You dear old brook, that from his Grace's park
Come bounding ! on you run near my old town :
My lord can't lock the water ; nor the lark,
Unless he kills him, can my lord keep down.
Up, is the song-note !
I 've tried it, too :—for comfort and renown,
I rather pitch'd upon the wrong note.

V

I 'm not ashamed : Not beaten 's still my boast :
Again I 'll rouse the people up to strike.
But home 's where different politics jar most.
Respectability the women like.
This form, or that form,—
The Government may be hungry pike,
But don't you mount a Chartist platform !

VI

Well, well ! Not beaten—spite of them, I shout ;
And my estate is suffering for the Cause.—
Now, what is yon brown water-rat about,
Who washes his old poll with busy paws ?
What does he mean by 't ?
It 's like defying all our natural laws,
For him to hope that he 'll get clean by 't.

VII

His seat is on a mud-bank, and his trade
Is dirt :—he 's quite contemptible ; and yet
The fellow 's all as anxious as a maid
To show a decent dress, and dry the wet.
Now it 's his whisker,
And now his nose, and ear : he seems to get
Each moment at the motion brisker !

VIII

To see him squat like little chaps at school,
I could let fly a laugh with all my might.
He peers, hangs both his fore-paws :—bless that fool,
He 's bobbing at his frill now !—what a sight !
Licking the dish up,
As if he thought to pass from black to white,
Like parson into lawny bishop.

IX

The elms and yellow reed-flags in the sun
Look on quite grave :—the sunlight flecks his side ;
And links of bindweed-flowers round him run,
And shine up doubled with him in the tide.
I 'm nearly splitting,
But nature seems like seconding his pride,
And thinks that his behaviour 's fitting.

X

That isle o' mud looks baking dry with gold,
His needle-muzzle still works out and in.
It really is a wonder to behold,
And makes me feel the bristles of my chin ;
Judged by appearance,
I fancy of the two I 'm nearer Sin,
And might as well commence a clearance.

XI

And that 's what my fine daughter said :—she meant :
Pray, hold your tongue, and wear a Sunday face.
Her husband, the young linendraper, spent
Much argument thereon :—I 'm their disgrace.
Bother the couple !
I feel superior to a chap whose place
Commands him to be neat and supple.

XII

But if I go and say to my old hen :
I 'll mend the gentry's boots, and keep discreet,
Until they grow *too* violent,—why, then,
A warmer welcome I might chance to meet :
Warmer and better.
And if she fancies her old cock is beat,
And drops upon her knees—so let her !

XIII

She suffered for me :—women, you 'll observe,
Don't suffer for a Cause, but for a man.
When I was in the dock she show'd her nerve :
I saw beneath her shawl my old tea-can
Trembling . . . she brought it
To screw me for my work : she loath'd my plan,
And therefore doubly kind I thought it.

XIV

I 've never lost the taste of that same tea :
That liquor on my logic floats like oil,
When I state facts, and fellows disagree.
For human creatures all are in a coil :
All may want pardon.
I see a day when every pot will boil
Harmonious in one great Tea-garden !

XV

We wait the setting of the Dandy's day,
Before that time !—He 's furbishing his dress,—
He *will* be ready for it !—and I say,
That yon old dandy rat amid the cress,—
Thanks to hard labour !—
If cleanliness is next to godliness,
The old fat fellow 's heaven's neighbour !

XVI

You teach me a fine lesson, my old boy !
I 've looked on my superiors far too long,
And small has been my profit as my joy.
You 've done the right while I 've denounced
the wrong.
Prosper me later !
Like you I will despise the sniggering throng,
And please myself and my Creator.

XVII

I 'll bring the linendraper and his wife
Some day to see you ; taking off my hat.
Should they ask why, I 'll answer : in my life
I never found so true a democrat.
Base occupation
Can't rob you of your own esteem, old rat !
I 'll preach you to the British nation.

SONG [1]

SHOULD thy love die ;
O bury it not under ice-blue eyes !
And lips that deny,
With a scornful surprise,
The life it once lived in thy breast when it wore no disguise.

Should thy love die ;
O bury it where the sweet wild-flowers blow !
And breezes go by,
With no whisper of woe ;
And strange feet cannot guess of the anguish that slumbers below.

Should thy love die ;
O wander once more to the haunt of the bee !
Where the foliaged sky
Is most sacred to see,
And thy being first felt its wild birth like a wind-wakened tree.

Should thy love die ;
O dissemble it ! smile ! let the rose hide the thorn !
While the lark sings on high,
And no thing looks forlorn,
Bury it, bury it, bury it where it was born.

[1] Originally printed in 'Poems,' 1851.

TO ALEX. SMITH, THE 'GLASGOW POET,'[1]

ON HIS SONNET TO 'FAME'

Not vainly doth the earnest voice of man
Call for the thing that is his pure desire !
Fame is the birthright of the living lyre !
To noble impulse Nature puts no ban.
Nor vainly to the Sphinx thy voice was raised !
Tho' all thy great emotions like a sea,
Against her stony immortality,
Shatter themselves unheeded and amazed.
Time moves behind her in a blind eclipse :
Yet if in her cold eyes the end of all
Be visible, as on her large closed lips
Hangs dumb the awful riddle of the earth ;—
She sees, and she might speak, since that wild call,
The mighty warning of a Poet's birth.

[1] 'The Leader,' December 20, 1851.

GRANDFATHER BRIDGEMAN

I

'HEIGH, boys!' cried Grandfather Bridgeman, 'it 's time before dinner to-day.'
He lifted the crumpled letter, and thumped a surprising 'Hurrah!'
Up jumped all the echoing young ones, but John, with the starch in his throat,
Said, 'Father, before we make noises, let 's see the contents of the note.'
The old man glared at him harshly, and twinkling made answer: 'Too bad!
John Bridgeman, I 'm always the whisky, and you are the water, my lad!'

II

But soon it was known thro' the house, and the house ran over for joy,
That news, good news, great marvels, had come from the soldier boy;
Young Tom, the luckless scapegrace, offshoot of Methodist John;
His grandfather's evening tale, whom the old man hailed as his son.
And the old man's shout of pride was a shout of his victory, too;
For he called his affection a method: the neighbours' opinions he knew.

III

Meantime, from the morning table removing the stout
breakfast cheer,
The drink of the three generations, the milk, the tea, and
the beer
(Alone in its generous reading of pints stood the Grand-
father's jug),
The women for sight of the missive came pressing to coax
and to hug.
He scattered them quick, with a buss and a smack;
thereupon he began
Diversions with John's little Sarah: on Sunday, the
naughty old man!

IV

Then messengers sped to the maltster, the auctioneer,
miller, and all
The seven sons of the farmer who housed in the range of
his call.
Likewise the married daughters, three plentiful ladies,
prime cooks,
Who bowed to him while they condemned, in meek hope
to stand high in his books.
'John's wife is a fool at a pudding,' they said, and the
light carts up hill
Went merrily, flouting the Sabbath: for puddings well
made mend a will.

V

The day was a van-bird of summer: the robin still piped,
but the blue,
As a warm and dreamy palace with voices of larks ringing
thro',

Looked down as if wistfully eyeing the blossoms that fell
from its lap :
A day to sweeten the juices : a day to quicken the sap.
All round the shadowy orchard sloped meadows in gold, and the dear
Shy violets breathed their hearts out : the maiden breath
of the year !

VI

Full time there was before dinner to bring fifteen of his
blood,
To sit at the old man's table : they found that the dinner
was good.
But who was she by the lilacs and pouring laburnums
concealed,
When under the blossoming apple the chair of the Grand-
father wheeled ?
She heard one little child crying, 'Dear brave Cousin
Tom ! ' as it leapt ;
Then murmured she : 'Let me spare them ! ' and passed
round the walnuts, and wept.

VII

Yet not from sight had she slipped ere feminine eyes could
detect
The figure of Mary Charlworth. 'It 's just what we all
might expect,'
Was uttered : and : 'Didn't I tell you ? ' Of Mary the
rumour resounds,
That she is now her own mistress, and mistress of five
thousand pounds.
'Twas she, they say, who cruelly sent young Tom to the war.
Miss Mary, we thank you now ! If you knew what we 're
thanking you for !

VIII

But, 'Have her in: let her hear it,' called Grandfather Bridgeman, elate,
While Mary's black-gloved fingers hung trembling with flight on the gate.
Despite the women's remonstrance, two little ones, lighter than deer,
Were loosed, and Mary, imprisoned, her whole face white as a tear,
Came forward with culprit footsteps. Her punishment was to commence:
The pity in her pale visage they read in a different sense.

IX

'You perhaps may remember a fellow, Miss Charlworth, a sort of black sheep,'
The old man turned his tongue to ironical utterance deep:
'He came of a Methodist dad, so it wasn't his fault if he kicked.
He earned a sad reputation, but Methodists are mortal strict.
His name was Tom, and, dash me! but Bridgeman I think you might add:
Whatever he was, bear in mind that he came of a Methodist dad.'

X

This prelude dismally lengthened, till Mary, starting, exclaimed,
'A letter, Sir, from your grandson?' 'Tom Bridgeman that rascal is named,'

The old man answered, and further, the words that sent
Tom to the ranks
Repeated as words of a person to whom they all owed
mighty thanks.
But Mary never blushed : with her eyes on the letter, she
sate,
And twice interrupting him faltered, ' The date, may I
ask, Sir, the date ? '

XI

' Why, that 's what I never look at in a letter,' the farmer
replied :
' Facts first ! and now I 'll be parson.' The Bridgeman
women descried
A quiver on Mary's eyebrows. One turned, and while
shifting her comb,
Said low to a sister : ' I 'm certain she knows more than
we about Tom.
She wants him now he 's a hero ! ' The same, resuming
her place,
Begged Mary to check them the moment she found it a
tedious case.

XII

Then as a mastiff swallows the snarling noises of cats,
The voice of the farmer opened. ' " Three cheers, and
off with your hats ! "
—That 's Tom. " We 've beaten them, Daddy, and
tough work it was, to be sure !
A regular stand-up combat : eight hours smelling powder
and gore.
I entered it Serjeant-Major,"—and now he commands a
salute,
And carries the flag of old England ! Heigh ! see him
lift foes on his foot !

XIII

'—An officer! ay, Miss Charlworth, he is, or he is so to be;
You 'll own war isn't such humbug: and Glory means something, you see.
"But don't say a word," he continues, "against the brave French any more."
—That stopt me: we 'll now march together. I couldn't read further before.
That "brave French" I couldn't stomach. He can't see their cunning to get
Us Britons to fight their battles, while best half the winnings they net!'

XIV

The old man sneered, and read forward. It was of that desperate fight;—
The Muscovite stole thro' the mist-wreaths that wrapped the chill Inkermann height,
Where stood our silent outposts: old England was in them that day!
O sharp worked his ruddy wrinkles, as if to the breath of the fray
They moved! He sat bareheaded: his long hair over him slow
Swung white as the silky bog-flowers in purple heath-hollows that grow.

XV

And louder at Tom's first person: acute and in thunder the 'I'
Invaded the ear with a whinny of triumph, that seem'd to defy

The hosts of the world. All heated, what wonder he
little could brook
To catch the sight of Mary's demure puritanical look ?
And still as he led the onslaught, his treacherous side-
shots he sent
At her who was fighting a battle as fierce, and who sat
there unbent.

XVI

' " We stood in line, and like hedgehogs the Russians
rolled under us thick.
They frightened me there."—He 's no coward ; for when,
Miss, they came at the quick,
The sight, he swears, was a breakfast.—" My stomach
felt tight : in a glimpse
I saw you snoring at home with the dear cuddled-up little
imps.
And then like the winter brickfields at midnight, hot fire
lengthened out.
Our fellows were just leashed bloodhounds : no heart of
the lot faced about.

XVII

' " And only that grumbler, Bob Harris, remarked that
we stood one to ten :
' Ye fool,' says Mick Grady, ' just tell 'em they know to
compliment men ! '
And I sang out your old words : ' If the opposite side
isn't God's,
Heigh ! after you 've counted a dozen, the pluckiest lads
have the odds.'
Ping-ping flew the enemies' pepper : the Colonel roared,
Forward, and we
Went at them. 'Twas first like a blanket : and then a
long plunge in the sea.

XVIII

‘ “ Well, now about me and the Frenchman : it happened
I can’t tell you how :
And, Grandfather, hear, if you love me, and put aside
prejudice now ” :
He never says “ Grandfather ”—Tom don’t—save it ’s a
serious thing.
“ Well, there were some pits for the rifles, just dug on our
French-leaning wing :
And backwards, and forwards, and backwards we went,
and at last I was vexed,
And swore I would never surrender a foot when the
Russians charged next.

XIX

‘ “ I know that life ’s worth keeping.”—Ay, so it is, lad ;
so it is !—
“ But my life belongs to a woman.”—Does that mean
Her Majesty, Miss ?—
“ These Russians came lumping and grinning : they ’re
fierce at it, though they are blocks.
Our fellows were pretty well pumped, and looked sharp
for the little French cocks.
Lord, didn’t we pray for their crowing ! when over us, on
the hill-top,
Behold the first line of them skipping, like kangaroos seen
on the hop.

XX

‘ “ That sent me into a passion, to think of them spying
our flight ! ”
Heigh, Tom ! you ’ve Bridgeman blood, boy ! And,
“ ‘ Face them ! ’ I shouted : ‘ All right ;

Sure, Serjeant, we 'll take their shot dacent, like gentlemen,' Grady replied.
A ball in his mouth, and the noble old Irishman dropped by my side.
Then there was just an instant to save myself, when a short wheeze
Of bloody lungs under the smoke, and a red-coat crawled up on his knees.

XXI

' " 'Twas Ensign Baynes of our parish."—Ah, ah, Miss Charlworth, the one
Our Tom fought for a young lady ? Come, now we 've got into the fun !—
" I shouldered him : he primed his pistol, and I trailed my musket, prepared."
Why, that 's a fine pick-a-back for ye, to make twenty Russians look scared !
" They came—never mind how many : we couldn't have run very well,
We fought back to back : ' face to face, our last time ! ' he said, smiling, and fell.

XXII

' " Then I strove wild for his body : the beggars saw glittering rings,
Which I vowed to send to his mother. I got some hard knocks and sharp stings,
But felt them no more than angel, or devil, except in the wind.
I know that I swore at a Russian for showing his teeth, and he grinned
The harder : quick, as from heaven, a man on a horse rode between,
And fired, and swung his bright sabre : I can't write you more of the scene.

XXIII

' " But half in his arms, and half at his stirrup, he bore
me right forth,
And pitched me among my old comrades : before I could
tell south from north,
He caught my hand up, and kissed it ! Don't ever let any
man speak
A word against Frenchmen, I near him ! I can't find his
name, tho' I seek.
But French, and a General, surely he was, and, God bless
him ! thro' him
I 've learnt to love a whole nation." ' The ancient man
paused, winking dim.

XXIV

A curious look, half woeful, was seen on his face as he
turned
His eyes upon each of his children, like one who but faintly
discerned
His old self in an old mirror. Then gathering sense in his
fist,
He sounded it hard on his knee-cap. ' Your hand, Tom,
the French fellow kissed !
He kissed my boy's old pounder ! I say he 's a gentle-
man ! ' Straight
The letter he tossed to one daughter ; bade her the
remainder relate.

XXV

Tom properly stated his praises in facts, but the lady
preferred
To deck the narration with brackets, and drop her ad-
ditional word.

What nobler Christian natures these women could boast,
who, 'twas known,
Once spat at the name of their nephew, and now made his
praises their own!
The letter at last was finished, the hearers breathed freely,
and sign
Was given, 'Tom's health!'—Quoth the farmer: 'Eh,
Miss? are you weak in the spine?'

XXVI

For Mary had sunk, and her body was shaking, as if in a fit.
Tom's letter she held, and her thumb-nail the month when
the letter was writ
Fast-dinted, while she hung sobbing: 'O, see, Sir, the
letter is old!
O, do not be too happy!'—'If I understand you, I 'm
bowled!'
Said Grandfather Bridgeman, 'and down go my wickets!
—not happy! when here,
Here 's Tom like to marry his General's daughter—or
widow—I 'll swear!

XXVII

'I wager he knows how to strut, too! It 's all on the
cards that the Queen
Will ask him to Buckingham Palace, to say what he 's
done and he 's seen.
Victoria 's fond of her soldiers: and she 's got a nose for
a fight.
If Tom tells a cleverish story—there is such a thing as a
knight!
And don't he look roguish and handsome!—To see a girl
snivelling there—
By George, Miss, it 's clear that you 're jealous!'—'I love
him!' she answered his stare.

XXVIII

'Yes! now!' breathed the voice of a woman.—'Ah! now!' quiver'd low the reply.
'And "now" 's just a bit too late, so it 's no use your piping your eye,'
The farmer added bluffly: 'Old Lawyer Charlworth was rich;
You followed his instructions in kicking Tom into the ditch.
If you 're such a dutiful daughter, that doesn't prove Tom is a fool.
Forgive and forget 's my motto! and here 's my grog growing cool!'

XXIX

'But, Sir,' Mary faintly repeated: 'for four long weeks I have failed
To come and cast on you my burden; such grief for you always prevailed!
My heart has so bled for you!' The old man burst on her speech:
'You 've chosen a likely time, Miss! a pretty occasion to preach!'
And was it not outrageous, that now, of all times, one should come
With incomprehensible pity! Far better had Mary been dumb.

XXX

But when again she stammered in this bewildering way,
The farmer no longer could bear it, and begged her to go, or to stay,

But not to be whimpering nonsense at such a time.
Pricked by a goad,
'Twas you who sent him to glory :—you 've come here to reap what you sowed.
Is that it?' he asked ; and the silence the elders preserved plainly said,
On Mary's heaving bosom this begging-petition was read.

XXXI

And that it was scarcely a bargain that she who had driven him wild
Should share now the fruits of his valour, the women expressed, as they smiled.
The family pride of the Bridgemans was comforted ; still, with contempt,
They looked on a monied damsel of modesty quite so exempt.
'O give me force to tell them!' cried Mary, and even as she spoke,
A shout and a hush of the children : a vision on all of them broke.

XXXII

Wheeled, pale, in a chair, and shattered, the wreck of their hero was seen ;
The ghost of Tom drawn slow o'er the orchard's shadowy green.
Could this be the martial darling they joyed in a moment ago ?
'He knows it ?' to Mary Tom murmured, and closed his weak lids at her 'No.'
'Beloved!' she said, falling by him, 'I have been a coward : I thought
You lay in the foreign country, and some strange good might be wrought.

XXXIII

'Each day I have come to tell him, and failed, with my hand on the gate.
I bore the dreadful knowledge, and crushed my heart with its weight.
The letter brought by your comrade—he has but just read it aloud!
It only reached him this morning!' Her head on his shoulder she bowed.
Then Tom with pity's tenderest lordliness patted her arm,
And eyed the old white-head fondly, with something of doubt and alarm.

XXXIV

O, take to your fancy a sculptor whose fresh marble offspring appears
Before him, shiningly perfect, the laurel-crown'd issue of years:
Is heaven offended? for lightning behold from its bosom escape,
And those are mocking fragments that made the harmonious shape!
He cannot love the ruins, till, feeling that ruins alone
Are left, he loves them threefold. So passed the old grandfather's moan.

XXXV

John's text for a sermon on Slaughter he heard, and he did not protest.
All rigid as April snowdrifts, he stood, hard and feeble; his chest

Just showing the swell of the fire as it melted him.
Smiting a rib,
'Heigh! what have we been about, Tom! Was this all
a terrible fib?'
He cried, and the letter forth-trembled. Tom told what
the cannon had done.
Few present but ached to see falling those aged tears on
his heart's son!

XXXVI

Up lanes of the quiet village, and where the mill-waters
rush red
Thro' browning summer meadows to catch the sun's
crimsoning head,
You meet an old man and a maiden who has the soft ways
of a wife
With one whom they wheel, alternate; whose delicate
flush of new life
Is prized like the early primrose. Then shake his right
hand, in the chair—
The old man fails never to tell you: 'You 've got the
French General's there!'

THE PROMISE IN DISTURBANCE

How low when angels fall their black descent,
Our primal thunder tells : known is the pain
Of music, that nigh throning wisdom went,
And one false note cast wailful to the insane.
Now seems the language heard of Love as rain
To make a mire where fruitfulness was meant.
The golden harp gives out a jangled strain,
Too like revolt from heaven's Omnipotent.
But listen in the thought ; so may there come
Conception of a newly-added chord,
Commanding space beyond where ear has home.
In labour of the trouble at its fount,
Leads Life to an intelligible Lord
The rebel discords up the sacred mount.

MODERN LOVE

I

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes :
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between ;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

II

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in
By shutting all too zealous for their sin :
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had !
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers :
A languid humour stole among the hours,
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown
Before his vision, and the world, forgot,
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown
The pit of infamy : and then again
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove
To ape the magnanimity of love,
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

III

This was the woman ; what now of the man ?
But pass him. If he comes beneath a heel,
He shall be crushed until he cannot feel,
Or, being callous, haply till he can.
But he is nothing :—nothing ? Only mark
The rich light striking out from her on him !
Ha ! what a sense it is when her eyes swim
Across the man she singles, leaving dark
All else ! Lord God, who mad'st the thing so fair,
See that I am drawn to her even now !
It cannot be such harm on her cool brow
To put a kiss ? Yet if I meet him there !
But she is mine ! Ah, no ! I know too well
I claim a star whose light is overcast :
I claim a phantom-woman in the Past.
The hour has struck, though I heard not the bell !

IV

All other joys of life he strove to warm,
And magnify, and catch them to his lip :
But they had suffered shipwreck with the ship,
And gazed upon him sallow from the storm.
Or if Delusion came, 'twas but to show
The coming minute mock the one that went.
Cold as a mountain in its star-pitched tent,
Stood high Philosophy, less friend than foe :
Whom self-caged Passion, from its prison-bars,
Is always watching with a wondering hate.
Not till the fire is dying in the grate,
Look we for any kinship with the stars.
Oh, wisdom never comes when it is gold,
And the great price we pay for it full worth :
We have it only when we are half earth.
Little avails that coinage to the old !

V

A message from her set his brain aflame.
A world of household matters filled her mind,
Wherein he saw hypocrisy designed :
She treated him as something that is tame,
And but at other provocation bites.
Familiar was her shoulder in the glass,
Through that dark rain : yet it may come to pass
That a changed eye finds such familiar sights
More keenly tempting than new loveliness.
The ' What has been ' a moment seemed his own :
The splendours, mysteries, dearer because known,
Nor less divine : Love's inmost sacredness
Called to him, ' Come ! '—In his restraining start,
Eyes nurtured to be looked at scarce could see
A wave of the great waves of Destiny
Convulsed at a checked impulse of the heart.

VI

It chanced his lips did meet her forehead cool.
She had no blush, but slanted down her eye.
Shamed nature, then, confesses love can die :
And most she punishes the tender fool
Who will believe what honours her the most !
Dead ! is it dead ? She has a pulse, and flow
Of tears, the price of blood-drops, as I know,
For whom the midnight sobs around Love's ghost,
Since then I heard her, and so will sob on.
The love is here ; it has but changed its aim.
O bitter barren woman ! what 's the name ?
The name, the name, the new name thou hast won ?
Behold me striking the world's coward stroke !
That will I not do, though the sting is dire.
—Beneath the surface this, while by the fire
They sat, she laughing at a quiet joke.

VII

She issues radiant from her dressing-room,
Like one prepared to scale an upper sphere :
—By stirring up a lower, much I fear !
How deftly that oiled barber lays his bloom !
That long-shanked dapper Cupid with frisked curls
Can make known women torturingly fair ;
The gold-eyed serpent dwelling in rich hair
Awakes beneath his magic whisks and twirls.
His art can take the eyes from out my head,
Until I see with eyes of other men ;
While deeper knowledge crouches in its den,
And sends a spark up :—is it true we are wed ?
Yea ! filthiness of body is most vile,
But faithlessness of heart I do hold worse.
The former, it were not so great a curse
To read on the steel-mirror of her smile.

VIII

Yet it was plain she struggled, and that salt
Of righteous feeling made her pitiful.
Poor twisting worm, so queenly beautiful !
Where came the cleft between us ? whose the fault ?
My tears are on thee, that have rarely dropped
As balm for any bitter wound of mine :
My breast will open for thee at a sign !
But, no : we are two reed-pipes, coarsely stopped :
The God once filled them with his mellow breath ;
And they were music till he flung them down,
Used ! used ! Hear now the discord-loving clown
Puff his gross spirit in them, worse than death !
I do not know myself without thee more :
In this unholy battle I grow base :
If the same soul be under the same face,
Speak, and a taste of that old time restore !

IX

He felt the wild beast in him betweenwhiles
So masterfully rude, that he would grieve
To see the helpless delicate thing receive
His guardianship through certain dark defiles.
Had he not teeth to rend, and hunger too ?
But still he spared her. Once : ' Have you no fear ? '
He said : 'twas dusk ; she in his grasp ; none near.
She laughed : ' No, surely ; am I not with you ? '
And uttering that soft starry ' you,' she leaned
Her gentle body near him, looking up ;
And from her eyes, as from a poison-cup,
He drank until the flittering eyelids screened.
Devilish malignant witch ! and oh, young beam
Of heaven's circle-glory ! Here thy shape
To squeeze like an intoxicating grape—
I might, and yet thou goest safe, supreme.

X

But where began the change ; and what 's my crime ?
The wretch condemned, who has not been arraigned,
Chafes at his sentence. Shall I, unsustained,
Drag on Love's nerveless body thro' all time ?
I must have slept, since now I wake. Prepare,
You lovers, to know Love a thing of moods :
Not, like hard life, of laws. In Love's deep woods,
I dreamt of loyal Life :—the offence is there !
Love's jealous woods about the sun are curled ;
At least, the sun far brighter there did beam.—
My crime is, that the puppet of a dream,
I plotted to be worthy of the world.
Oh, had I with my darling helped to mince
The facts of life, you still had seen me go
With hindward feather and with forward toe,
Her much-adored delightful Fairy Prince !

XI

Out in the yellow meadows, where the bee
Hums by us with the honey of the Spring,
And showers of sweet notes from the larks on wing
Are dropping like a noon-dew, wander we.
Or is it now ? or was it then ? for now,
As then, the larks from running rings pour showers :
The golden foot of May is on the flowers,
And friendly shadows dance upon her brow.
What 's this, when Nature swears there is no change
To challenge eyesight ? Now, as then, the grace
Of heaven seems holding earth in its embrace.
Nor eyes, nor heart, has she to feel it strange ?
Look, woman, in the West. There wilt thou see
An amber cradle near the sun's decline :
Within it, featured even in death divine,
Is lying a dead infant, slain by thee.

XII

Not solely that the Future she destroys,
And the fair life which in the distance lies
For all men, beckoning out from dim rich skies :
Nor that the passing hour's supporting joys
Have lost the keen-edged flavour, which begat
Distinction in old times, and still should breed
Sweet Memory, and Hope,—earth's modest seed,
And heaven's high-prompting : not that the world
is flat
Since that soft-luring creature I embraced
Among the children of Illusion went :
Methinks with all this loss I were content,
If the mad Past, on which my foot is based,
Were firm, or might be blotted : but the whole
Of life is mixed : the mocking Past will stay :
And if I drink oblivion of a day,
So shorten I the stature of my soul.

XIII

'I play for Seasons ; not Eternities ! '
Says Nature, laughing on her way. 'So must
All those whose stake is nothing more than dust ! '
And lo, she wins, and of her harmonies
She is full sure ! Upon her dying rose
She drops a look of fondness, and goes by,
Scarce any retrospection in her eye ;
For she the laws of growth most deeply knows,
Whose hands bear, here, a seed-bag—there, an urn.
Pledged she herself to aught, 'twould mark her end !
This lesson of our only visible friend
Can we not teach our foolish hearts to learn ?
Yes ! yes !—but, oh, our human rose is fair
Surpassingly ! Lose calmly Love's great bliss,
When the renewed for ever of a kiss
Whirls life within the shower of loosened hair !

XIV

What soul would bargain for a cure that brings
Contempt the nobler agony to kill ?
Rather let me bear on the bitter ill,
And strike this rusty bosom with new stings !
It seems there is another veering fit,
Since on a gold-haired lady's eyeballs pure
I looked with little prospect of a cure,
The while her mouth's red bow loosed shafts of wit.
Just heaven ! can it be true that jealousy
Has decked the woman thus ? and does her head
Swim somewhat for possessions forfeited ?
Madam, you teach me many things that be.
I open an old book, and there I find
That ' Women still may love whom they deceive.'
Such love I prize not, madam : by your leave,
The game you play at is not to my mind.

XV

I think she sleeps : it must be sleep, when low
Hangs that abandoned arm toward the floor ;
The face turned with it. Now make fast the door.
Sleep on : it is your husband, not your foe.
The Poet's black stage-lion of wronged love
Frights not our modern dames :—well if he did !
Now will I pour new light upon that lid,
Full-sloping like the breasts beneath. 'Sweet dove,
Your sleep is pure. Nay, pardon : I disturb.
I do not ? good ! ' Her waking infant-stare
Grows woman to the burden my hands bear :
Her own handwriting to me when no curb
Was left on Passion's tongue. She trembles through ;
A woman's tremble—the whole instrument :—
I show another letter lately sent.
The words are very like : the name is new.

XVI

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour,
When in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us : and hushed we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing :
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. ' Ah, yes !
Love dies ! ' I said : I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift :—
Now am I haunted by that taste ! that sound !

XVII

At dinner, she is hostess, I am host.
Went the feast ever cheerfuller ? She keeps
The Topic over intellectual deeps
In buoyancy afloat. They see no ghost.
With sparkling surface-eyes we ply the ball :
It is in truth a most contagious game :
HIDING THE SKELETON, shall be its name.
Such play as this the devils might appal !
But here 's the greater wonder ; in that we,
Enamoured of an acting nought can tire,
Each other, like true hypocrites, admire ;
Warm-lighted looks, Love's ephemerioe,
Shoot gaily o'er the dishes and the wine.
We waken envy of our happy lot.
Fast, sweet, and golden, shows the marriage-knot.
Dear guests, you now have seen Love's corpse-light
shine.

XVIII

Here Jack and Tom are paired with Moll and Meg.
Curved open to the river-reach is seen
A country merry-making on the green.
Fair space for signal shakings of the leg.
That little screwy fiddler from his booth,
Whence flows one nut-brown stream, commands the joints
Of all who caper here at various points.
I have known rustic revels in my youth :
The May-fly pleasures of a mind at ease.
An early goddess was a country lass :
A charmed Amphion-oak she tripped the grass.
What life was that I lived ? The life of these ?
Heaven keep them happy ! Nature they seem near.
They must, I think, be wiser than I am ;
They have the secret of the bull and lamb.
'Tis true that when we trace its source, 'tis beer.

XIX

No state is enviable. To the luck alone
Of some few favoured men I would put claim.
I bleed, but her who wounds I will not blame.
Have I not felt her heart as 'twere my own
Beat thro' me ? could I hurt her ? heaven and hell !
But I could hurt her cruelly ! Can I let
My Love's old time-piece to another set,
Swear it can't stop, and must for ever swell ?
Sure, that 's one way Love drifts into the mart
Where goat-legged buyers throng. I see not plain :—
My meaning is, it must not be again.
Great God ! the maddest gambler throws his heart.
If any state be enviable on earth,
'Tis yon born idiot's, who, as days go by,
Still rubs his hands before him, like a fly,
In a queer sort of meditative mirth.

XX

I am not of those miserable males
Who sniff at vice and, daring not to snap,
Do therefore hope for heaven. I take the hap
Of all my deeds. The wind that fills my sails
Propels ; but I am helmsman. Am I wrecked,
I know the devil has sufficient weight
To bear : I lay it not on him, or fate.
Besides, he 's damned. That man I do suspect
A coward, who would burden the poor deuce
With what ensues from his own slipperiness.
I have just found a wanton-scented tress
In an old desk, dusty for lack of use.
Of days and nights it is demonstrative,
That, like some aged star, gleam luridly.
If for those times I must ask charity,
Have I not any charity to give ?

XXI

We three are on the cedar-shadowed lawn ;
My friend being third. He who at love once laughed
Is in the weak rib by a fatal shaft
Struck through, and tells his passion's bashful dawn
And radiant culmination, glorious crown,
When ' this ' she said : went ' thus ' : most wondrous
she.
Our eyes grow white, encountering : that we are three,
Forgetful ; then together we look down.
But he demands our blessing ; is convinced
That words of wedded lovers must bring good.
We question ; if we dare ! or if we should !
And pat him, with light laugh. We have not winced.
Next, she has fallen. Fainting points the sign
To happy things in wedlock. When she wakes,
She looks the star that thro' the cedar shakes :
Her lost moist hand clings mortally to mine.

XXII

What may the woman labour to confess ?
There is about her mouth a nervous twitch.
'Tis something to be told, or hidden :—which ?
I get a glimpse of hell in this mild guess.
She has desires of touch, as if to feel
That all the household things are things she knew.
She stops before the glass. What sight in view ?
A face that seems the latest to reveal !
For she turns from it hastily, and tossed
Irresolute steals shadow-like to where
I stand ; and wavering pale before me there,
Her tears fall still as oak-leaves after frost.
She will not speak. I will not ask. We are
League-sundered by the silent gulf between.
You burly lovers on the village green,
Yours is a lower, and a happier star !

XXIII

'Tis Christmas weather, and a country house
Receives us : rooms are full : we can but get
An attic-crib. Such lovers will not fret
At that, it is half-said. The great carouse
Knocks hard upon the midnight's hollow door,
But when I knock at hers, I see the pit.
Why did I come here in that dullard fit ?
I enter, and lie couched upon the floor.
Passing, I caught the coverlet's quick beat :—
Come, Shame, burn to my soul ! and Pride, and Pain—
Foul demons that have tortured me, enchain !
Out in the freezing darkness the lambs bleat.
The small bird stiffens in the low starlight.
I know not how, but shuddering as I slept,
I dreamed a banished angel to me crept :
My feet were nourished on her breasts all night.

XXIV

The misery is greater, as I live !
To know her flesh so pure, so keen her sense,
That she does penance now for no offence,
Save against Love. The less can I forgive !
The less can I forgive, though I adore
That cruel lovely pallor which surrounds
Her footsteps ; and the low vibrating sounds
That come on me, as from a magic shore.
Low are they, but most subtle to find out
The shrinking soul. Madam, 'tis understood
When women play upon their womanhood,
It means, a Season gone. And yet I doubt
But I am duped. That nun-like look waylays
My fancy. Oh ! I do but wait a sign !
Pluck out the eyes of pride ! thy mouth to mine !
Never ! though I die thirsting. Go thy ways !

XXV

You like not that French novel ? Tell me why.
You think it quite unnatural. Let us see.
The actors are, it seems, the usual three :
Husband, and wife, and lover. She—but fie !
In England we 'll not hear of it. Edmond,
The lover, her devout chagrin doth share ;
Blanc-mange and absinthe are his penitent fare,
Till his pale aspect makes her over-fond :
So, to preclude fresh sin, he tries rosbif.
Meantime the husband is no more abused :
Auguste forgives her ere the tear is used.
Then hangeth all on one tremendous IF :—
If she will choose between them. She does choose ;
And takes her husband, like a proper wife.
Unnatural ? My dear, these things are life :
And life, some think, is worthy of the Muse.

XXVI

Love ere he bleeds, an eagle in high skies,
Has earth beneath his wings : from reddened eve
He views the rosy dawn. In vain they weave
The fatal web below while far he flies.
But when the arrow strikes him, there 's a change.
He moves but in the track of his spent pain,
Whose red drops are the links of a harsh chain,
Binding him to the ground, with narrow range.
A subtle serpent then has Love become.
I had the eagle in my bosom erst :
Henceforward with the serpent I am cursed.
I can interpret where the mouth is dumb.
Speak, and I see the side-lie of a truth.
Perchance my heart may pardon you this deed :
But be no coward :—you that made Love bleed,
You must bear all the venom of his tooth !

XXVII

Distraction is the panacea, Sir !
I hear my oracle of Medicine say.
Doctor ! that same specific yesterday
I tried, and the result will not deter
A second trial. Is the devil's line
Of golden hair, or raven black, composed ?
And does a cheek, like any sea-shell rosed,
Or clear as widowed sky, seem most divine ?
No matter, so I taste forgetfulness.
And if the devil snare me, body and mind,
Here gratefully I score :—he seemëd kind,
When not a soul would comfort my distress !
O sweet new world, in which I rise new made !
O Lady, once I gave love : now I take !
Lady, I must be flattered. Shouldst thou wake
The passion of a demon, be not afraid.

XXVIII

I must be flattered. The imperious
Desire speaks out. Lady, I am content
To play with you the game of Sentiment,
And with you enter on paths perilous ;
But if across your beauty I throw light,
To make it threefold, it must be all mine.
First secret ; then avowed. For I must shine
Envied,—I, lessened in my proper sight !
Be watchful of your beauty, Lady dear !
How much hangs on that lamp you cannot tell.
Most earnestly I pray you, tend it well :
And men shall see me as a burning sphere ;
And men shall mark you eyeing me, and groan
To be the God of such a grand sunflower !
I feel the promptings of Satanic power,
While you do homage unto me alone.

XXIX

Am I failing ? For no longer can I cast
A glory round about this head of gold.
Glory she wears, but springing from the mould ;
Not like the consecration of the Past !
Is my soul beggared ? Something more than earth
I cry for still : I cannot be at peace
In having Love upon a mortal lease.
I cannot take the woman at her worth !
Where is the ancient wealth wherewith I clothed
Our human nakedness, and could endow
With spiritual splendour a white brow
That else had grinned at me the fact I loathed ?
A kiss is but a kiss now ! and no wave
Of a great flood that whirls me to the sea.
But, as you will ! we 'll sit contentedly,
And eat our pot of honey on the grave.

XXX

What are we first ? First, animals ; and next
Intelligences at a leap ; on whom
Pale lies the distant shadow of the tomb,
And all that draweth on the tomb for text.
Into which state comes Love, the crowning sun :
Beneath whose light the shadow loses form.
We are the lords of life, and life is warm.
Intelligence and instinct now are one.
But nature says : ' My children most they seem
When they least know me : therefore I decree
That they shall suffer.' Swift doth young Love flee,
And we stand wakened, shivering from our dream.
Then if we study Nature we are wise.
Thus do the few who live but with the day :
The scientific animals are they.—
Lady, this is my sonnet to your eyes.

XXXI

This golden head has wit in it. I live
Again, and a far higher life, near her.
Some women like a young philosopher ;
Perchance because he is diminutive.
For woman's manly god must not exceed
Proportions of the natural nursing size.
Great poets and great sages draw no prize
With women : but the little lap-dog breed,
Who can be hugged, or on a mantel-piece
Perched up for adoration, these obtain
Her homage. And of this we men are vain ?
Of this ! 'Tis ordered for the world's increase !
Small flattery ! Yet she has that rare gift
To beauty, Common Sense. I am approved.
It is not half so nice as being loved,
And yet I do prefer it. What 's my drift ?

XXXII

Full faith I have she holds that rarest gift
To beauty, Common Sense. To see her lie
With her fair visage an inverted sky
Bloom-covered, while the underlids uplift,
Would almost wreck the faith ; but when her mouth
(Can it kiss sweetly ? sweetly !) would address
The inner me that thirsts for her no less,
And has so long been languishing in drouth,
I feel that I am matched ; that I am man !
One restless corner of my heart or head,
That holds a dying something never dead,
Still frets, though Nature giveth all she can.
It means, that woman is not, I opine,
Her sex's antidote. Who seeks the asp
For serpent's bites ? 'Twould calm me could I clasp
Shrieking Bacchantes with their souls of wine !

XXXIII

'In Paris, at the Louvre, there have I seen
The sumptuously-feathered angel pierce
Prone Lucifer, descending. Looked he fierce,
Showing the fight a fair one? Too serene!
The young Pharsalians did not disarray
Less willingly their locks of floating silk:
That suckling mouth of his upon the milk
Of heaven might still be feasting through the fray.
Oh, Raphael! when men the Fiend do fight,
They conquer not upon such easy terms.
Half serpent in the struggle grow these worms.
And does he grow half human, all is right.'
This to my Lady in a distant spot,
Upon the theme: *While mind is mastering clay,*
Gross clay invades it. If the spy you play,
My wife, read this! Strange love talk, is it not?

XXXIV

Madam would speak with me. So, now it comes :
The Deluge or else Fire ! She 's well ; she thanks
My husbandship. Our chain on silence clanks.
Time leers between, above his twiddling thumbs.
Am I quite well ? Most excellent in health !
The journals, too, I diligently peruse.
Vesuvius is expected to give news :
Niagara is no noisier. By stealth
Our eyes dart scrutinizing snakes. She 's glad
I 'm happy, says her quivering under-lip.
' And are not you ? ' ' How can I be ? ' ' Take
ship !
For happiness is somewhere to be had.'
' Nowhere for me ! ' Her voice is barely heard.
I am not melted, and make no pretence.
With commonplace I freeze her, tongue and sense.
Niagara or Vesuvius is deferred.

XXXV

It is no vulgar nature I have wived.
Secretive, sensitive, she takes a wound
Deep to her soul, as if the sense had swooned,
And not a thought of vengeance had survived.
No confidences has she : but relief
Must come to one whose suffering is acute.
O have a care of natures that are mute !
They punish you in acts : their steps are brief.
What is she doing ? What does she demand
From Providence or me ? She is not one
Long to endure this torpidly, and shun
The drugs that crowd about a woman's hand.
At Forfeits during snow we played, and I
Must kiss her. ' Well performed ! ' I said : then she :
' 'Tis hardly worth the money, you agree ? '
Save her ? What for ? To act this wedded lie !

XXXVI

My Lady unto Madam makes her bow.
The charm of women is, that even while
You 're probed by them for tears, you yet may smile,
Nay, laugh outright, as I have done just now.
The interview was gracious : they anoint
(To me aside) each other with fine praise :
Discriminating compliments they raise,
That hit with wondrous aim on the weak point :
My Lady's nose of Nature might complain.
It is not fashioned aptly to express
Her character of large-browed steadfastness.
But Madam says : Thereof she may be vain !
Now, Madam's faulty feature is a glazed
And inaccessible eye, that has soft fires,
Wide gates, at love-time, only. This admires
My Lady. At the two I stand amazed.

XXXVII

Along the garden terrace, under which
A purple valley (lighted at its edge
By smoky torch-flame on the long cloud-ledge
Whereunder dropped the chariot) glimmers rich,
A quiet company we pace, and wait
The dinner-bell in prae-digestive calm.
So sweet up violet banks the Southern balm
Breathes round, we care not if the bell be late :
Though here and there grey seniors question Time
In irritable coughings. With slow foot
The low rosed moon, the face of Music mute,
Begins among her silent bars to climb.
As in and out, in silvery dusk, we thread,
I hear the laugh of Madam, and discern
My Lady's heel before me at each turn.
Our tragedy, is it alive or dead ?

XXXVIII

Give to imagination some pure light
In human form to fix it, or you shame
The devils with that hideous human game :—
Imagination urging appetite !
Thus fallen have earth's greatest Gogmagogs,
Who dazzle us, whom we can not revere :
Imagination is the charioteer
That, in default of better, drives the hogs.
So, therefore, my dear Lady, let me love !
My soul is arrowy to the light in you.
You know me that I never can renew
The bond that woman broke : what would you have ?
'Tis Love, or Vileness ! not a choice between,
Save petrifaction ! What does Pity here ?
She killed a thing, and now it 's dead, 'tis dear.
Oh, when you counsel me, think what you mean !

XXXIX

She yields : my Lady in her noblest mood
Has yielded : she, my golden-crownëd rose !
The bride of every sense ! more sweet than those
Who breathe the violet breath of maidenhood.
O visage of still music in the sky !
Soft moon ! I feel thy song, my fairest friend !
True harmony within can apprehend
Dumb harmony without. And hark ! 'tis nigh !
Belief has struck the note of sound : a gleam
Of living silver shows me where she shook
Her long white fingers down the shadowy brook,
That sings her song, half waking, half in dream.
What two come here to mar this heavenly tune ?
A man is one : the woman bears my name,
And honour. Their hands touch ! Am I still
tame ?
God, what a dancing spectre seems the moon !

XL

I bade my Lady think what she might mean.
Know I my meaning, I ? Can I love one,
And yet be jealous of another ? None
Commits such folly. Terrible Love, I ween,
Has might, even dead, half sighing to upheave
The lightless seas of selfishness amain :
Seas that in a man's heart have no rain
To fall and still them. Peace can I achieve,
By turning to this fountain-source of woe,
This woman, who 's to Love as fire to wood ?
She breathed the violet breath of maidenhood
Against my kisses once ! but I say, No !
The thing is mocked at ! Helplessly afloat,
I know not what I do, whereto I strive.
The dread that my old love may be alive
Has seized my nursling new love by the throat.

XLI

How many a thing which we cast to the ground,
When others pick it up becomes a gem !
We grasp at all the wealth it is to them ;
And by reflected light its worth is found.
Yet for us still 'tis nothing ! and that zeal
Of false appreciation quickly fades.
This truth is little known to human shades,
How rare from their own instinct 'tis to feel !
They waste the soul with spurious desire,
That is not the ripe flame upon the bough.
We two have taken up a lifeless vow
To rob a living passion : dust for fire !
Madam is grave, and eyes the clock that tells
Approaching midnight. We have struck despair
Into two hearts. O, look we like a pair
Who for fresh nuptials joyfully yield all else ?

XLII

I am to follow her. There is much grace
In woman when thus bent on martyrdom.
They think that dignity of soul may come,
Perchance, with dignity of body. Base!
But I was taken by that air of cold
And statuesque sedateness, when she said
'I 'm going'; lit a taper, bowed her head,
And went, as with the stride of Pallas bold.
Fleshly indifference horrible! The hands
Of Time now signal: O, she 's safe from me!
Within those secret walls what do I see?
Where first she set the taper down she stands:
Not Pallas: Hebe shamed! Thoughts black as death
Like a stirred pool in sunshine break. Her wrists
I catch: she faltering, as she half resists,
'You love . . . ? love . . . ? love . . . ?' all on an indrawn breath.

XLIII

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave !
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave ;
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand :
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid
The full-waked sense ; or failing that, degrade !
'Tis morning : but no morning can restore
What we have forfeited. I see no sin :
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be ! Passions spin the plot :
We are betrayed by what is false within.

XLIV

They say, that Pity in Love's service dwells,
A porter at the rosy temple's gate.
I missed him going : but it is my fate
To come upon him now beside his wells ;
Whereby I know that I Love's temple leave,
And that the purple doors have closed behind.
Poor soul ! if, in those early days unkind,
Thy power to sting had been but power to grieve,
We now might with an equal spirit meet,
And not be matched like innocence and vice.
She for the Temple's worship has paid price,
And takes the coin of Pity as a cheat.
She sees through simulation to the bone :
What 's best in her impels her to the worst :
Never, she cries, shall Pity soothe Love's thirst,
Or foul hypocrisy for truth atone !

XLV

It is the season of the sweet wild rose,
My Lady's emblem in the heart of me !
So golden-crownëd shines she gloriously,
And with that softest dream of blood she glows :
Mild as an evening heaven round Hesper bright !
I pluck the flower, and smell it, and revive
The time when in her eyes I stood alive.
I seem to look upon it out of Night.
Here 's Madam, stepping hastily. Her whims
Bid her demand the flower, which I let drop.
As I proceed, I feel her sharply stop,
And crush it under heel with trembling limbs.
She joins me in a cat-like way, and talks
Of company, and even condescends
To utter laughing scandal of old friends.
These are the summer days, and these our walks.

XLVI

At last we parley : we so strangely dumb
In such a close communion ! It befell
About the sounding of the Matin-bell,
And lo ! her place was vacant, and the hum
Of loneliness was round me. Then I rose,
And my disordered brain did guide my foot
To that old wood where our first love-salute
Was interchanged : the source of many throes !
There did I see her, not alone. I moved
Toward her, and made proffer of my arm.
She took it simply, with no rude alarm ;
And that disturbing shadow passed reproved.
I felt the pained speech coming, and declared
My firm belief in her, ere she could speak.
A ghastly morning came into her cheek,
While with a widening soul on me she stared.

XLVII

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky,
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye :
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love, that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth !
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love, that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
Where I have seen across the twilight wave
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

XLVIII

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,
Destroyed by subtleties these women are !
More brain, O Lord, more brain ! or we shall mar
Utterly this fair garden we might win.
Behold ! I looked for peace, and thought it near.
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.
Alas ! that was the fatal draught, I fear.
For when of my lost Lady came the word,
This woman, O this agony of flesh !
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,
That I might seek that other like a bird.
I do adore the nobleness ! despise
The act ! She has gone forth, I know not where.
Will the hard world my sentience of her share ?
I feel the truth ; so let the world surmise.

XLIX

He found her by the ocean's moaning verge,
Nor any wicked change in her discerned ;
And she believed his old love had returned,
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,
And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.
She dared not say, ' This is my breast : look in.'
But there 's a strength to help the desperate weak.
That night he learned how silence best can speak
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.
About the middle of the night her call
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
' Now kiss me, dear ! it may be, now ! ' she said.
Lethe had passed those lips, and he knew all.

L

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat :
The union of this ever-diverse pair !
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once ; clear as the dew on flowers :
But they fed not on the advancing hours :
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life !—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore !

THE PATRIOT ENGINEER

'Sirs! may I shake your hands?
My countrymen, I see!
I 've lived in foreign lands
Till England 's Heaven to me.
A hearty shake will do me good,
And freshen up my sluggish blood.'

Into his hard right hand we struck,
Gave the shake, and wish'd him luck.

'—From Austria I come,
An English wife to win,
And find an English home,
And live and die therein.
Great Lord! how many a year I 've pined
To drink old ale and speak my mind!'

Loud rang our laughter, and the shout
Hills round the Meuse-boat echoed about.

'—Ay, no offence: laugh on,
Young gentlemen: I 'll join.
Had you to exile gone,
Where free speech is base coin,
You 'd sigh to see the jolly nose
Where Freedom's native liquor flows!'

He this time the laughter led,
Dabbling his oily bullet head.

'—Give me, to suit my moods,
An ale-house on a heath,
I 'll hand the crags and woods
To B'elzebub beneath.
A fig for scenery ! what scene
Can beat a Jackass on a green ? '

Gravely he seem'd, with gaze intense,
Putting the question to common sense.

'—Why, there 's the ale-house bench :
The furze-flower shining round :
And there 's my waiting-wench,
As lissome as a hound.
With " hail Britannia ! " ere I drink,
I 'll kiss her with an artful wink.'

Fair flash'd the foreign landscape while
We breath'd again our native Isle.

'—The geese may swim hard-by ;
They gabble, and you talk :
You 're sure there 's not a spy
To mark your name with chalk.
My heart 's an oak, and it won't grow
In flower-pots, foreigners must know.'

Pensive he stood : then shook his head
Sadly ; held out his fist, and said :

'—You 've heard that Hungary 's floor'd ?
They 've got her on the ground.
A traitor broke her sword :
Two despots held her bound.
I 've seen her gasping her last hope :
I 've seen her sons strung up b' the rope.

'Nine gallant gentlemen
In Arad they strung up!
I work'd in peace till then:—
That poison'd all my cup.
A smell of corpses haunted me:
My nostril sniff'd like life for sea.

'Take money for my hire
From butchers?—not the man!
I 've got some natural fire,
And don't flash in the pan;—
A few ideas I reveal'd:—
'Twas well old England stood my shield!

'Said I, "The Lord of Hosts
Have mercy on your land!
I see those dangling ghosts,—
And you may keep command,
And hang, and shoot, and have your day:
They hold your bill, and you must pay.

'"You 've sent them where they 're strong,
You carrion Double-Head!
I hear them sound a gong
In Heaven above!"—I said.
"My God, what feathers won't you moult
For this!" says I: and then I bolt.

'The Bird 's a beastly Bird,
And what is more, a fool.
I shake hands with the herd
That flock beneath his rule.
They 're kindly; and their land is fine.
I thought it rarer once than mine.

'And rare would be its lot,
But that he baulks its powers :
It 's just an earthen pot
For hearts of oak like ours.
Think ! Think !—four days from those frontiers,
And I 'm a-head full fifty years.

'It tingles to your scalps,
To think of it, my boys !
Confusion on their Alps,
And all their baby toys !
The mountains Britain boasts are men :
And scale you them, my brethren ! '

Cluck, went his tongue ; his fingers, snap.
Britons were proved all heights to cap.

And we who worshipp'd crags,
Where purple splendours burn'd,
Our idol saw in rags,
And right about were turn'd.
Horizons rich with trembling spires
On violet twilights lost their fires.

And heights where morning wakes
With one cheek over snow ;—
And iron-wallèd lakes
Where sits the white moon low ;—
For us on youthful travel bent,
The robing picturesque was rent.

Wherever Beauty show'd
The wonders of her face,
This man his Jackass rode,
High despot of the place.

Fair dreams of our enchanted life
Fled fast from his shrill island fife.

And yet we liked him well ;
We laugh'd with honest hearts :—
He shock'd some inner spell,
And rous'd discordant parts.
We echoed what we half abjured :
And hating, smilingly endured.

Moreover, could we be
To our dear land disloyal ?
And were not also we
Of History's blood-Royal ?
We glow'd to think how donkeys graze
In England, thrilling at their brays.

For there a man may view
An aspect more sublime
Than Alps against the blue :—
The morning eyes of Time !
The very Ass participates
The glory Freedom radiates !

CASSANDRA

I

Captive on a foreign shore,
Far from Ilion's hoary wave,
Agamemnon's bridal slave
Speaks Futurity no more :
Death is busy with her grave.

II

Thick as water, bursts remote
Round her ears the alien din,
While her little sullen chin
Fills the hollows of her throat :
Silent lie her slaughter'd kin.

III

Once to many a pealing shriek,
Lo, from Ilion's topmost tower,
Ilion's fierce prophetic flower
Cried the coming of the Greek !
Black in Hades sits the hour.

IV

Eyeing phantoms of the Past,
Folded like a prophet's scroll,
In the deep's long shoreward roll
Here she sees the anchor cast :
Backward moves her sunless soul.

V

Chieftains, brethren of her joy,
Shades, the white light in their eyes
Slanting to her lips, arise,
Crowding quick the plains of Troy :
Now they tell her not she lies.

VI

O the bliss upon the plains,
Where the joining heroes clashed
Shield and spear, and, unabashed,
Challenged with hot chariot-reins
Gods !—they glimmer ocean-washed.

VII

Alien voices round the ships,
Thick as water, shouting Home.
Argives, pale as midnight foam,
Wax before her awful lips :
White as stars that front the gloom.

VIII

Like a torch-flame that by day
Up the daylight twists, and, pale,
Catches air in leaps that fail,
Crushed by the inveterate ray,
Through her shines the Ten-Years' Tale.

IX

Once to many a pealing shriek,
Lo, from Ilion's topmost tower,
Ilion's fierce prophetic flower
Cried the coming of the Greek !
Black in Hades sits the hour.

X

Still upon her sunless soul
Gleams the narrow hidden space
Forward, where her fiery race
Falters on its ashen goal :
Still the Future strikes her face.

XI

See toward the conqueror's car
Step the purple Queen whose hate
Wraps red-armed her royal mate
With his Asian tempest-star :
Now Cassandra views her Fate.

XII

King of men ! the blinded host
Shout :—she lifts her brooding chin :
Glad along the joyous din
Smiles the grand majestic ghost :
Clytemnestra leads him in.

XIII

Lo, their smoky limbs aloof,
Shadowing heaven and the seas,
Fates and Furies, tangling Threes,
Tear and mix above the roof :
Fates and fierce Eumenides.

XIV

Is the prophetess with rods
Beaten, that she writhes in air ?
With the Gods who never spare,
Wrestling with the unsparing Gods,
Lone, her body struggles there.

XV

Like the snaky torch-flame white,
Levelled as aloft it twists,
She, her soaring arms, and wrists
Drooping, struggles with the light,
Helios, bright above all mists !

XVI

In his orb she sees the tower,
Dusk against its flaming rims,
Where of old her wretched limbs
Twisted with the stolen power :
Ilium all the lustre dims !

XVII

O the bliss upon the plains,
Where the joining heroes clashed
Shield and spear, and, unabashed,
Challenged with hot chariot-reins
Gods !—they glimmer ocean-washed.

XVIII

Thrice the Sun-god's name she calls ;
Shrieks the deed that shames the sky ;
Like a fountain leaping high,
Falling as a fountain falls :
Lo, the blazing wheels go by !

XIX

Captive on a foreign shore,
Far from Ilion's hoary wave,
Agamemnon's bridal slave
Speaks Futurity no more :
Death is busy with her grave.

THE YOUNG USURPER

On my darling's bosom
Has dropped a living rosy bud,
Fair as brilliant Hesper
Against the brimming flood.
She handles him,
She dandles him,
She fondles him and eyes him :
And if upon a tear he wakes,
With many a kiss she dries him :
She covets every move he makes,
And never enough can prize him.
Ah, the young Usurper !
I yield my golden throne :
Such angel bands attend his hands
To claim it for his own.

MARGARET'S BRIDAL EVE

I

THE old grey mother she thrummed on her knee :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
And which of the handsome young men shall it be ?
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

My daughter, come hither, come hither to me :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Come, point me your finger on him that you see :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

O mother, my mother, it never can be :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
For I shall bring shame on the man marries me :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

Now let your tongue be deep as the sea :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
And the man 'll jump for you, right briskly will he :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

Tall Margaret wept bitterly :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
And as her parent bade did she :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

O the handsome young man dropped down on his knee :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Pale Margaret gave him her hand, woe 's me !
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

II

O mother, my mother, this thing I must say :
There is a rose in the garden ;
Ere he lies on the breast where that other lay :
And the bird sings over the roses.

Now, folly, my daughter, for men are men :
There is a rose in the garden ;
You marry them blindfold, I tell you again :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O mother, but when he kisses me !
There is a rose in the garden ;
My child, 'tis which shall sweetest be !
And the bird sings over the roses.

O mother, but when I awake in the morn !
There is a rose in the garden ;
My child, you are his, and the ring is worn :
And the bird sings over the roses.

Tall Margaret sighed and loosened a tress :
There is a rose in the garden ;
Poor comfort she had of her comeliness :
And the bird sings over the roses.

My mother will sink if this thing be said :
There is a rose in the garden ;
That my first betrothed came thrice to my bed :
And the bird sings over the roses.

He died on my shoulder the third cold night :
There is a rose in the garden ;
I dragged his body all through the moonlight :
And the bird sings over the roses.

But when I came by my father's door :
There is a rose in the garden ;
I fell in a lump on the stiff dead floor :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O neither to heaven, nor yet to hell :
There is a rose in the garden ;
Could I follow the lover I loved so well !
And the bird sings over the roses.

III

The bridesmaids slept in their chambers apart :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Tall Margaret walked with her thumping heart :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

The frill of her nightgown below the left breast :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Had fall'n like a cloud of the moonlighted West :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

But where the West-cloud breaks to a star :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Pale Margaret's breast showed a winding scar :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

O few are the brides with such a sign !
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Though I went mad the fault was mine :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

I must speak to him under this roof to-night :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
I shall burn to death if I speak in the light :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

O my breast ! I must strike you a bloodier wound :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Than when I scored you red and swooned :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

I will stab my honour under his eye :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Though I bleed to the death, I shall let out the lie :
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

O happy my bridesmaids ! white sleep is with you !
There is a rose that 's ready ;
Had he chosen among you he might sleep too !
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

O happy my bridesmaids ! your breasts are clean :
There is a rose that 's ready ;
You carry no mark of what has been !
There 's a rose that 's ready for clipping.

IV

An hour before the chilly beam :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
The bridegroom started out of a dream :
And the bird sings over the roses.

He went to the door, and there espied :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
The figure of his silent bride :
And the bird sings over the roses.

He went to the door, and let her in :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
Whiter looked she than a child of sin :
And the bird sings over the roses.

She looked so white, she looked so sweet :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
She looked so pure he fell at her feet :
And the bird sings over the roses.

He fell at her feet with love and awe :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
A stainless body of light he saw :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O Margaret, say you are not of the dead !
Red rose and white in the garden ;
My bride ! by the angels at night are you led ?
And the bird sings over the roses.

I am not led by the angels about :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
But I have a devil within to let out :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O Margaret ! my bride and saint !
Red rose and white in the garden ;
There is on you no earthly taint :
And the bird sings over the roses.

I am no saint, and no bride can I be :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
Until I have opened my bosom to thee :
And the bird sings over the roses.

To catch at her heart she laid one hand :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
She told the tale where she did stand :
And the bird sings over the roses.

She stood before him pale and tall :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
Her eyes between his, she told him all :
And the bird sings over the roses.

She saw how her body grew freckled and foul :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
She heard from the woods the hooting owl :
And the bird sings over the roses.

With never a quiver her mouth did speak :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
O when she had done she stood so meek !
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom stamped and called her vile :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
He did but waken a little smile :
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom raged and called her foul :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
She heard from the woods the hooting owl :
And the bird sings over the roses.

He muttered a name full bitter and sore :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
She fell in a lump on the still dead floor :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O great was the wonder, and loud the wail :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
When through the household flew the tale :
And the bird sings over the roses.

The old grey mother she dressed the bier :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
With a shivering chin and never a tear :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O had you but done as I bade you, my child !
Red rose and white in the garden ;
You would not have died and been reviled :
And the bird sings over the roses.

The bridegroom he hung at midnight by the bier :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
He eyed the white girl thro' a dazzling tear :
And the bird sings over the roses.

O had you been false as the women who stray :
Red rose and white in the garden ;
You would not be now with the Angels of Day !
And the bird sings over the roses.

MARIAN

I

She can be as wise as we,
And wiser when she wishes ;
She can knit with cunning wit,
And dress the homely dishes.
She can flourish staff or pen,
And deal a wound that lingers ;
She can talk the talk of men,
And touch with thrilling fingers.

II

Match her ye across the sea,
Natures fond and fiery ;
Ye who zest the turtle's nest
With the eagle's eyrie.
Soft and loving is her soul,
Swift and lofty soaring ;
Mixing with its dove-like dole
Passionate adoring.

III

Such a she who 'll match with me ?
In flying or pursuing,
Subtle wiles are in her smiles
To set the world a-wooing.
She is steadfast as a star,
And yet the maddest maiden :
She can wage a gallant war,
And give the peace of Eden.

BY MORNING TWILIGHT

Night, like a dying mother,
Eyes her young offspring, Day.
The birds are dreamily piping.
And O, my love, my darling !
The night is life ebb'd away :
Away beyond our reach !
A sea that has cast us pale on the beach ;
Weeds with the weeds and the pebbles
That hear the lone tamarisk rooted in sand
Sway
With the song of the sea to the land.

UNKNOWN FAIR FACES

Though I am faithful to my loves lived through,
And place them among Memory's great stars,
Where burns a face like Hesper : one like Mars :
Of visages I get a moment's view,
Sweet eyes that in the heaven of me, too,
Ascend, tho' virgin to my life they passed.
Lo, these within my destiny seem glassed
At times so bright, I wish that Hope were new.
A gracious freckled lady, tall and grave,
Went, in a shawl voluminous and white,
Last sunset by ; and going sow'd a glance.
Earth is too poor to hold a second chance ;
I will not ask for more than Fortune gave :
My heart she goes from—never from my sight !

SHEMSELNIHAR

O MY lover ! the night like a broad smooth wave
Bears us onward, and morn, a black rock, shines wet.
How I shuddered—I knew not that I was a slave,
Till I looked on thy face :—then I writhed in the net.
Then I felt like a thing caught by fire, that her star
Glowed dark on the bosom of Shemselnihar.

And he came, whose I am : O my lover ! he came :
And his slave, still so envied of women, was I :
And I turned as a hissing leaf spits from the flame,
Yes, I shrivelled to dust from him, haggard and dry.
O forgive her :—she was but as dead lilies are :
The life of her heart fled from Shemselnihar.

Yet with thee like a full throbbing rose how I bloom !
Like a rose by the fountain whose showering we hear,
As we lie, O my lover ! in this rich gloom,
Smelling faint the cool breath of the lemon-groves near.
As we lie gazing out on that glowing great star—
Ah ! dark on the bosom of Shemselnihar.

Yet with thee am I not as an arm of the vine,
Firm to bind thee, to cherish thee, feed thee sweet ?
Swear an oath on my lip to let none disentwine
The life that here fawns to give warmth to thy feet.
I on thine, thus ! no more shall that jewelled Head jar
The music thou breathest on Shemselnihar.

Far away, far away, where the wandering scents
Of all flowers are sweetest, white mountains among,
There my kindred abide in their green and blue tents :
Bear me to them, my lover ! they lost me so young.
Let us slip down the stream and leap steed till afar
None question thy claim upon Shemselnihar.

O that long note the bulbul gave out—meaning love !
O my lover, hark to him and think it my voice !
The blue night like a great bell-flower from above
Drooping low and gold-eyed : O, but hear him rejoice !
Can it be ? 'twas a flash ! that accurst scimitàr
In thought even cuts thee from Shemselnihar.

Yes, I would that, less generous, he would oppress,
He would chain me, upbraid me, burn deep brands for hate,
Than with this mask of freedom and gorgeousness
Bespangle my slavery, mock my strange fate.
Would, would, would, O my lover, he knew—dared debar
Thy coming, and earn curse of Shemselnihar !

A ROAR THROUGH THE TALL TWIN ELM-TREES

A ROAR thro' the tall twin elm-trees
The mustering storm betrayed :
The South-wind seized the willow
That over the water swayed.

Then fell the steady deluge
In which I strove to doze,
Hearing all night at my window
The knock of the winter rose.

The rainy rose of winter !
An outcast it must pine.
And from thy bosom outcast
Am I, dear lady mine.

WHEN I WOULD IMAGE

WHEN I would image her features,
Comes up a shrouded head :
I touch the outlines, shrinking ;
She seems of the wandering dead.

But when love asks for nothing,
And lies on his bed of snow,
The face slips under my eyelids,
All in its living glow.

Like a dark cathedral city,
Whose spires, and domes, and towers
Quiver in violet lightnings,
My soul basks on for hours.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

THY greatest knew thee, Mother Earth ; unsoured
He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflowered
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips,
The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
Close mirrors of us : thence had he the laugh
We feel is thine : broad as ten thousand beeves
At pasture ! thence thy songs, that winnow chaff
From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last leaves
Whirl, if they have no response—they enforced
To fatten Earth when from her soul divorced.

CONTINUED

How smiles he at a generation ranked
In gloomy noddings over life ! They pass.
Not he to feed upon a breast unthanked,
Or eye a beauteous face in a cracked glass.
But he can spy that little twist of brain
Which moved some weighty leader of the blind,
Unwitting 'twas the goad of personal pain,
To view in curst eclipse our Mother's mind,
And show us of some rigid harridan
The wretched bondmen till the end of time.
O lived the Master now to paint us Man,
That little twist of brain would ring a chime
Of whence it came and what it caused, to start
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart.

ODE TO THE SPIRIT OF EARTH IN AUTUMN

Fair Mother Earth lay on her back last night,
To gaze her fill on Autumn's sunset skies,
When at a waving of the fallen light
Sprang realms of rosy fruitage o'er her eyes.
A lustrous heavenly orchard hung the West,
Wherein the blood of Eden bloomed again :
Red were the myriad cherub-mouths that pressed,
Among the clusters, rich with song, full fain,
But dumb, because that overmastering spell
Of rapture held them dumb : then, here and there,
A golden harp lost strings ; a crimson shell
Burnt grey ; and sheaves of lustre fell to air.
The illimitable eagerness of hue
Bronzed, and the beamy winged bloom that flew
'Mid those bunched fruits and thronging figures failed.
A green-edged lake of saffron touched the blue,
With isles of fireless purple lying through :
And Fancy on that lake to seek lost treasures sailed.

Not long the silence followed :
The voice that issues from thy breast,
O glorious South-west,
Along the gloom-horizon holloa'd ;
Warning the valleys with a mellow roar
Through flapping wings ; then sharp the woodland bore
A shudder and a noise of hands :
A thousand horns from some far vale
In ambush sounding on the gale.
Forth from the cloven sky came bands

Of revel-gathering spirits ; trooping down,
Some rode the tree-tops ; some on torn cloud-strips
Burst screaming thro' the lighted town :
And scudding seaward, some fell on big ships :
Or mounting the sea-horses blew
Bright foam-flakes on the black review
Of heaving hulls and burying beaks.

Still on the farthest line, with outpuffed cheeks,
'Twixt dark and utter dark, the great wind drew
From heaven that disenchanted harmony
To join earth's laughter in the midnight blind :
Booming a distant chorus to the shrieks
Preluding him : then he,
His mantle streaming thunderingly behind,
Across the yellow realm of stiffened Day,
Shot thro' the woodland alleys signals three ;
And with the pressure of a sea
Plunged broad upon the vale that under lay.

Night on the rolling foliage fell :
But I, who love old hymning night,
And know the Dryad voices well,
Discerned them as their leaves took flight,
Like souls to wander after death :
Great armies in imperial dyes,
And mad to tread the air and rise,
The savage freedom of the skies
To taste before they rot. And here,
Like frail white-bodied girls in fear,
The birches swung from shrieks to sighs ;
The aspens, laughers at a breath,
In showering spray-falls mixed their cries,
Or raked a savage ocean-strand

With one incessant drowning screech.
Here stood a solitary beech,
That gave its gold with open hand,
And all its branches, toning chill,
Did seem to shut their teeth right fast,
To shriek more mercilessly shrill,
And match the fierceness of the blast.

But heard I a low swell that noised
Of far-off ocean, I was 'ware
Of pines upon their wide roots poised,
Whom never madness in the air
Can draw to more than loftier stress
Of mournfulness, not mournfulness
For melancholy, but Joy's excess,
That singing on the lap of sorrow faints :
And Peace, as in the hearts of saints
Who chant unto the Lord their God ;
Deep Peace below upon the muffled sod,
The stillness of the sea's unswaying floor.
Could I be sole there not to see
The life within the life awake ;
The spirit bursting from the tree,
And rising from the troubled lake ?
Pour, let the wines of Heaven pour !
The Golden Harp is struck once more,
And all its music is for me !
Pour, let the wines of Heaven pour !
And, ho, for a night of Pagan glee !

There is a curtain o'er us.
For once, good souls, we 'll not pretend
To be aught better than her who bore us,
And is our only visible friend.
Hark to her laughter ! who laughs like this,

Can she be dead, or rooted in pain ?
She has been slain by the narrow brain,
But for us who love her she lives again.
Can she die ? O, take her kiss !

The crimson-footed nymph is panting up the glade,
With the wine-jar at her arm-pit, and the drunken ivy-braid
Round her forehead, breasts, and thighs : starts a Satyr,
and they speed :
Hear the crushing of the leaves : hear the cracking of the
bough !
And the whistling of the bramble, the piping of the weed !

But the bull-voiced oak is battling now :
The storm has seized him half-asleep,
And round him the wild woodland throngs
To hear the fury of his songs,
The uproar of an outraged deep.
He wakes to find a wrestling giant
Trunk to trunk and limb to limb,
And on his rooted force reliant
He laughs and grasps the broadened giant,
And twist and roll the Anakim ;
And multitudes, acclaiming to the cloud,
Cry which is breaking, which is bowed.

Away, for the cymbals clash aloft
In the circles of pine, on the moss-floor soft.
The nymphs of the woodland are gathering there.
They huddle the leaves, and trample, and toss ;
They swing in the branches, they roll in the moss,
They blow the seed on the air.
Back to back they stand and blow
The winged seed on the cradling air,
A fountain of leaves over bosom and back.

The pipe of the Faun comes on their track,
And the weltering alleys overflow
With musical shrieks and wind-wedded hair.
The riotous companies melt to a pair.
Bless them, mother of kindness !

A star has nodded through
The depths of the flying blue.
Time only to plant the light
Of a memory in the blindness.
But time to show me the sight
Of my life thro' the curtain of night ;
Shining a moment, and mixed
With the onward-hurrying stream,
Whose pressure is darkness to me ;
Behind the curtain, fixed,
Beams with endless beam
That star on the changing sea.

Great Mother Nature ! teach me, like thee,
To kiss the season and shun regrets.
And am I more than the mother who bore,
Mock me not with thy harmony !
Teach me to blot regrets,
Great Mother ! me inspire
With faith that forward sets
But feeds the living fire,
Faith that never frets
For vagueness in the form.
In life, O keep me warm !
For, what is human grief ?
And what do men desire ?
Teach me to feel myself the tree,
And not the withered leaf.
Fixed am I and await the dark to-be

And O, green bounteous Earth !
Bacchante Mother ! stern to those
Who live not in thy heart of mirth ;
Death shall I shrink from, loving thee ?
Into the breast that gives the rose,
Shall I with shuddering fall ?

Earth, the mother of all,
Moves on her stedfast way,
Gathering, flinging, sowing.
Mortals, we live in her day,
She in her children is growing.

She can lead us, only she,
Unto God's footstool, whither she reaches :
Loved, enjoyed, her gifts must be,
Reverenced the truths she teaches,
Ere a man may hope that he
Ever can attain the glee
Of things without a destiny !

She knows not loss :
She feels but her need,
Who the winged seed
With the leaf doth toss.

And may not men to this attain ?
That the joy of motion, the rapture of being,
Shall throw strong light when our season is fleeing,
Nor quicken aged blood in vain,
At the gates of the vault, on the verge of the plain ?
Life thoroughly lived is a fact in the brain,
While eyes are left for seeing.

Behold, in yon stripped Autumn, shivering grey,
Earth knows no desolation.
She smells regeneration
In the moist breath of decay.

Prophetic of the coming joy and strife,
Like the wild western war-chief sinking
Calm to the end he eyes unblinking,
Her voice is jubilant in ebbing life.

He for his happy hunting-fields
Forgets the droning chant, and yields
His numbered breaths to exultation
In the proud anticipation :
Shouting the glories of his nation,
Shouting the grandeur of his race,
Shouting his own great deeds of daring :
And when at last death grasps his face,
And stiffened on the ground in peace
He lies with all his painted terrors glaring ;
Hushed are the tribe to hear a threading cry :
Not from the dead man ;
Not from the standers-by :
The spirit of the red man
Is welcomed by his fathers up on high.

MARTIN'S PUZZLE

I

THERE she goes up the street with her book in her hand,
And her Good morning, Martin! Ay, lass, how d' ye do?
Very well, thank you, Martin!—I can't understand!
I might just as well never have cobbled a shoe!
I can't understand it. She talks like a song;
Her voice takes your ear like the ring of a glass;
She seems to give gladness while limping along,
Yet sinner ne'er suffer'd like that little lass.

II

First, a fool of a boy ran her down with a cart.
Then, her fool of a father—a blacksmith by trade—
Why the deuce does he tell us it half broke his heart?
His heart!—where 's the leg of the poor little maid!
Well, that 's not enough; they must push her down-stairs,
To make her go crooked: but why count the list?
If it 's right to suppose that our human affairs
Are all order'd by heaven—there, bang goes my fist!

III

For if angels can look on such sights—never mind!
When you 're next to blaspheming, it 's best to be mum.
The parson declares that her woes weren't designed;
But, then, with the parson it 's all kingdom-come.

Lose a leg, save a soul—a convenient text ;
I call it Tea doctrine, not savouring of God.
When poor little Molly wants ‘ chastening,’ why, next
The Archangel Michael might taste of the rod.

IV

But, to see the poor darling go limping for miles
To read books to sick people !—and just of an age
When girls learn the meaning of ribands and smiles !
Makes me feel like a squirrel that turns in a cage.
The more I push thinking the more I revolve :
I never get farther :—and as to her face,
It starts up when near on my puzzle I solve,
And says, ‘ This crush’d body seems such a sad case.’

V

Not that she ’s for complaining : she reads to earn pence ;
And from those who can’t pay, simple thanks are enough.
Does she leave lamentation for chaps without sense ?
Howsoever, she ’s made up of wonderful stuff.
Ay, the soul in her body must be a stout cord ;
She sings little hymns at the close of the day,
Though she has but three fingers to lift to the Lord,
And only one leg to kneel down with to pray.

VI

What I ask is, Why persecute such a poor dear,
If there ’s Law above all ? Answer that if you can !
Irreligious I ’m not ; but I look on this sphere
As a place where a man should just think like a man.

It isn't fair dealing ! But, contrariwise,
Do bullets in battle the wicked select ?
Why, then it 's all chance-work ! And yet, in her eyes,
She holds a fixed something by which I am checked.

VII

Yonder riband of sunshine aslope on the wall,
If you eye it a minute 'll have the same look :
So kind ! and so merciful ! God of us all !
It 's the very same lesson we get from the Book.
Then, is Life but a trial ? Is that what is meant ?
Some must toil, and some perish, for others below :
The injustice to each spreads a common content ;
Ay ! I 've lost it again, for it can't be quite so.

VIII

She 's the victim of fools : that seems nearer the mark.
On earth there are engines and numerous fools.
Why the Lord can permit them, we 're still in the dark ;
He does, and in some sort of way they 're His tools.
It 's a roundabout way, with respect let me add,
If Molly goes crippled that we may be taught :
But, perhaps, it 's the only way, though it 's so bad ;
In that case we 'll bow down our heads,—as we ought.

IX

But the worst of *me* is, that when I bow my head,
I perceive a thought wriggling away in the dust,
And I follow its tracks, quite forgetful, instead
Of humble acceptance : for, question I must !
Here 's a creature made carefully—carefully made !
Put together with craft, and then stamped on, and why ?
The answer seems nowhere : it 's discord that 's played.
The sky 's a blue dish !—an implacable sky !

X

Stop a moment : I seize an idea from the pit.
They tell us that discord, though discord, alone,
Can be harmony when the notes properly fit :
Am I judging all things from a single false tone ?
Is the Universe one immense Organ, that rolls
From devils to angels ? I 'm blind with the sight.
It pours such a splendour on heaps of poor souls !
I might try at kneeling with Molly to-night.

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to His Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

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